

Chairman Genachowski,

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

I am a video interpreter who uses sign language to relay Video Relay Service (VRS) calls between deaf and hearing people. Because of my work with the deaf community, I understand first-hand how critical VRS communication is to deaf people and the hearing people with whom they communicate.

I understand the FCC is proposing changes to the VRS program. I am afraid these proposals will negatively impact the quality of service, interpreting, and equipment. The changes will also result in reduced access of VRS services for the deaf. I do not agree with your proposals!

VRS empowers deaf people to communicate on an equal basis with hearing people. Because of VRS, deaf people now have the opportunity to place calls and communicate the same way hearing people have been communicating for years. Deaf people use VRS to compete in the workplace, stay in touch with family and friends, contact their doctor, access emergency services and communicate in all the same ways hearing people do with their phone.

I am afraid that if the FCC proposals go into effect, deaf people will not have choices in their equipment and will no longer have access to the quality VRS equipment we now use. I am also afraid that if your proposals go into effect, it will degrade the quality of service I provide, thereby affecting the level of functional equivalence deaf people experience and have come to rely on. If the FCC wants change and wants to provide functional equivalency - and wants us interpreters in the middle to assist, this is not the way to do it. These ideas are a huge step in the wrong direction. The FCC cannot consider their proposals to be a reasonable replacement for the high-quality, unique VRS technology we use every day. Let's keep VRS innovative and progressive. Erick Merritt