

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 also depend on VRS to communicate with my family member who is Deaf. If the FCC makes the changes they are proposing I fear my uncle will be unable to continue living on his own. Right now he is able to live independently in the house he shared with his parents until their deaths because he has access to VRS and doesn't have to wait for a long time for an interpreter or face using substandard equipment as he would if the FCC goes through with the proposed changes. These changes would impact his quality of life in ways you cannot imagine. Without access to an interpreter when he needs one to call for help, either 911 for emergencies or simply to his sisters to come help him with his latest need, he would be forced to leave his home and enter either a group home or place the burden on family to take him in. VRS has meant he can continue to be independent for the last 5 years. Losing that independence would be mentally and emotionally crippling for him. Please consider people who depend on VRS for more than just social phone calls. Do not make the proposed changes to VRS.

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. Lisa Gasser