

Chairman Genachowski,

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

I am writing in response to the FCC's request for comments on the "Structure and practices of the video relay service (VRS) program and on proposed VRS compensation rates." I am very concerned that the changes being considered will destroy a program that is vitally important to people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing.

I am not deaf, but I know firsthand how VRS works. VRS allows people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to use the "phone" to communicate just like people who can hear. With VRS they can do the things we take for granted - make a doctor's appointment or call a child's school. VRS puts people who are deaf on a more level playing field.

If you have ever had a phone call with a bad connection causing high static on the phone where you cannot understand the person you are talking with. That is comparative to what Video Relay Interpreters will have to deal with if the quality of equipment is lessened. Blurry screens, camera movements that are not in sync with the signers, and visual static. This makes all calls very difficult if not impossible, whether calling a friend or calling 911.

The FCC has also suggested that VRS can be just as effectively provided through government-mandated software that is used on off-the-shelf equipment like common videophones, computers, or tablets. While such equipment can provide a convenient backup solution, it can't replace the videophones and other technologies specifically designed to take into account the special needs of the deaf and hard-of-hearing.

If the FCC takes away skilled ASL interpreters and innovative equipment, VRS as we know it today won't exist. This would be a huge step backward for the rights and opportunities of Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

Thank you for reconsidering the FCC changes,

Catherine Howle Catherine Howle