

Chairman Genachowski,

CG Docket Nos. 03-123 and 10-51

I am an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter who interprets for deaf 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 they now use. I am also afraid that if your proposals go into effect, it will degrade the quality of service, 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, 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 deaf people use every day. Keep VRS innovative and progressive.

The government says it is interested in moving our sluggish economy in a growing direction. How can we as interpreters and the deaf grow if you cut services and reduces the rates paid to the VRS services. You would not think of doing that to other people who have a disability.

Next time you go see a movie or Skype someone you hold dear, think about the deaf who definitely do not take such things for granted. Nor should you. Please do not take away the services needed for the deaf to compete in today's job market and economy. Many deaf are professionals, engineers, teachers and doctors. They have worked so hard to get where they are now. Please don't send them backwards because of cuts in VRS rates and services. Thank you. Catherine Heckel