

To Whom It May Concern:

Watching television is an American pastime enjoyed by nearly everyone. TVs have been a standard item in homes for more than 50 years. Programming is what helps to make American culture known around the world.

Accessible televisions and similar playback equipment that a consumer can have in their home make TV viewing possible for people who have a visual disability. There is nothing more frustrating than trying to tune in a favorite program and not being able to find it - not due to your personal skills in manipulating the device, but due to a technical limitation encountered because you are blind. A person is cut out of being able to be part of the community when they cannot watch what their neighbors and friends with vision are able to watch.

Accessible televisions and similar equipment must be available at commercial retail stores. Ask yourself, how would you like it if you could not purchase the unit you chose because it is only available from the manufacturer? And may not be in stock? Electronics can be funny - they work or they don't. When acquiring a new unit, you often find out you need a new one because your unit at home doesn't turn on. Who wants to wait 10 days for it to be shipped? Would you have that patience?

My husband was totally blind from infancy, yet earned a BS in electrical engineering, and an MS in engineering from major Big Ten institutions (U of Illinois and Purdue, respectively). Nothing frustrated him more than having to seek help when the television malfunctioned, and he could not get feedback himself.

People who are blind or visually impaired share the same American value of independence that everyone else prizes. They should be able to make the same purchases, knowing that what is accessible can be found at the local retail store.

Thank you for your consideration.  
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