

Dear, To Whom It May Concern

I have been blessed with the gift and ability to both hear well and speak well. Well enough that I have n't had the need for a hearing device or special services such as CaptionCall. But sadly, not the same can be said for every other American. One in five Americans experience hearing loss in at least one ear. That's 48 million people. That number far exceeds the health care industry estimate of 25 million people. It's proven that there is a direct link between hearing loss, and age. The majority of people suffering from hearing loss are those of an older age. 30% of adults between 65 and 74 and 47% of adults 75 years of age and older. As these facts are adding up, clearly so are the number of those who need the help of hearing devices and phone captioning services.

As we all get older, we are inevitably going to lose our ability to work and earn a viable income of our own. With that being said, this is where a limited income comes into play for many of these individuals. Disability benefits are a limited means to provide for one's self, in some cases more limited than others. This limited flow of income causes a variety of issues, including the lack of a way to communicate. Hearing services, and captioning phone services can help that tremendously, and have already to a great point. I feel that in order to continue helping the hearing impaired community, and continue the progression of these telephone services we need to put in place changes that are going to propel the ability to do so, and not put in places changes that are going to severely limit the ability to help those in need.

The first of two said changes, is the change that is going to start forcing customers to pay a fee for their phones. Customers using the CaptionCall services are already paying for a phone service, and paying for an Internet service in order for their phones to work, and for them to be able to make calls. Which can already be quite expensive. So adding an additional cost among those already being paid, is going to put more strain on limited budgets. And not to mention those using a smart phone, only have to pay for a phone service, and a data (Internet service) package in order for their phones to work. So as it stands now, without adding this additional fee, the basic functionality of a CaptionCall phone for the hearing impaired, and a smart phone, for those not hearing impaired is pretty close. And staying within the laws set by the ADA, functional equivalency is what phone caption services are to provide. And to further expand on this proposed change, and the cost of phones, more and more cell phone companies, and phone providers are charging less and less for phones, even top of the line phones are coming down in price. So charging a high fee, again would go against the ADA and functional equivalency. In addition forcing those who already use a CaptionCall phone, and those who wish to use one in the future to provide certification of their hearing loss, is yet another additional cost on a limited income/fixed budget. Individuals without hearing loss, who wonder into a phone store, don't have to provide a certification that they can hear. So in keeping things fair and equal this shouldn't be a requirement.

The second of two proposed changes is, the captioning off feature at the start of any captioned phone

call. Captions on a CaptionCall phone, are clearly a basic function of the phone, and the main reason why hard of hearing people get the phone. Captions are so crucial to those with hearing loss. Imagine yourself being in the middle of a panic, an emergency call, to a family member or even to 911, place yourself in that emotion and mindset, and then realize that because of your hearing disability that you are missing out on information that could very well be life alerting. And then having to remember to push a button to turn on captions, a feature that you expect to already be on. It would be very frustrating, and very devastating. Also at the same time, you could be on the phone with someone that you care about, a family member, or a friend, they could be telling you that they love you, something that we all enjoy hearing, and you'd be missing out. Captions being a basic function of the phone, shouldn't be something that is set to "off" just like the volume of a regular phone isn't automatically turned down when we answer a call. In being fair, being equal, and staying in accordance with the ADA laws already set in place, the caption button should be set to on at the start of each and every call.

Honestly, to me not only is this about being fair, and being equal, it's about doing what is right for the customer. Creating a common ground through the ability to share conversation. CaptionCall is helping to eliminate the phrases "hearing world" and "deaf/hearing impaired world" and making it all one world, the same world regardless of disabilities.

Please keep all of these facts and statements in mind as you go about looking over these proposed changes. Keep in mind that making these talked about changes would severely and further disabled those who are already disabled, and already struggling.

Thank you for your time and consideration into this matter.

Sincerely,

Anne Goff