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FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION

June 25, 1998

Federal Communications Commission  
Office of the Secretary, Room 222  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioner:

I am writing to you as a totally blind person and as a professional who works for an independent living center. In my work, I advocate for people with all types of disabilities. Therefore, I am interested in universal access for telecommunication services and products. Universal access would enable people with all types of disabilities to access telecommunication devices. This would result in greater independence in their personal lives and professional lives. Independence is extremely important to people with disabilities because it enhances self esteem and promotes inclusion into society.

It is important for me as a totally blind person to be able to access telecommunication products and services which increases my independence both at home and at work. I have been an Amateur Radio Operator for 37 years and have noticed that the equipment is becoming more complex. It is apparent that no consideration has been given in the design of this equipment for people with visual disabilities. As our population ages, the need for accessible equipment will only increase.

I believe that the United States currently has the technological know how and ability to make telecommunication equipment universally accessible. In order for a product to be accessible to me, knobs, buttons, and switches must either be marked tactilely or with some type of audio output. Audio output would benefit people who have limited vision or a learning disability also. It is also important to have the manuals and other documentation available in an alternative format such as Braille or on cassette tape.

I commend the FCC for issuing proposed rules to implement section 255 of the Telecommunications Act of 1996 and urge the FCC to adopt the suggestions contained in these comments so that the needs of people with disabilities can be considered in the design, development, and fabrication of telecommunication products and services.

Sincerely,

Donald E. Maroney  
Loveland Branch Manager

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