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May 24, 2010

The Honorable Julius Genachowski
Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 Twelfth Street, SW
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Chairman Genachowski,

I am concerned about the Commission's recent proposal to make significant changes to the Video Relay Service (VRS) compensation process. As you know, VRS enables Americans who are deaf and hard-of-hearing to make routine and emergency calls using their own language. The Americans with Disabilities Act directs the Commission to ensure that deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals have access to "functionally equivalent" telecommunications services nationwide.

I understand that the Commission intends to shift from the long-term compensation method, to a "cost plus" method which may not account for the real costs of providing VRS. I am concerned that the proposed compensation rate structure could result in certain VRS providers being paid as much as 50% more than others for the same service.

I encourage the Commission to look carefully at potential severe and unintended consequences these new rates may have on the deaf community. While I understand that the VRS compensation program has suffered from a number of instances of fraud, I fail to see how this new rate structure will reduce fraud.

We need to ensure that any rate structure is fair, predictable, and will encourage innovation and advancement.

Sincerely,

Collin C. Peterson

Collin C. Peterson
Member of Congress

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