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Proceeding(s): 26-52, 17-59, 02-278, 22-2
Confirmation #: 20260602296209548
Submitted: Jun 02, 2026 9:52:24 AM
Status: RECEIVED
Name(s) of Filer(s) TDIforAccess, Inc., Deaf Equality, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center at Gallaudet University, Communication Service for the Deaf, Hearing Loss Association of America, National Association of the Deaf, Deaf Seniors of America, American Council of the Blind, Perkins School for the Blind, American Foundation for the Blind
Law Firm(s)
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Type of Filing COMMENT
File Number
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**Before the
FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION
Washington, D.C. 20554**

In the Matter of)	
)	
Improving Customer Service and Protecting Consumers through Onshoring)	CG Docket No. 26-52
)	
Advanced Methods to Target and Eliminate Unlawful Robocalls)	CG Docket No. 17-59
)	
Rules and Regulations Implementing the Telephone Consumer Protection Act of 1991)	CG Docket No. 02-278
)	
Empowering Broadband Consumers Through Transparency)	CG Docket No. 22-2
)	

COMMENTS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ORGANIZATIONS

TDIforAccess, Inc.

Deaf Equality

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Technology
Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center at
Gallaudet University

Communication Service for the Deaf

Hearing Loss Association of America

National Association of the Deaf

Deaf Seniors of America

American Council of the Blind

Perkins School for the Blind

American Foundation for the Blind

Dated: June 2, 2026

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Accessibility Organizations appreciate the Commission's efforts to, among other things, improve customer service experiences and communications, and protect consumers' sensitive personal information. We, however, urge the Commission to ensure that any action it takes provides consumers with disabilities, including those who are Deaf, DeafDisabled, DeafBlind, Late-Deafened and Hard of Hearing, with the same level of clear and effective communication on customer service calls that it requires for other members of the general public, including by requiring the provision of Direct Video Calling ("DVC") services during customer service interactions.

DVC provides those of us who are ASL users with a truly equal opportunity to comprehend the complexities that typically accompany the selection of communications and video programming offerings that fall under the Commission's jurisdiction. Given the availability of this technology and the underlying goals of this proceeding, it is time for the FCC to require DVC as a regular component of customer service experiences for ASL users for companies under its jurisdiction.

We believe the Commission not only has the authority, but also the obligation to adopt measures that ensure equal access to customer service for people with disabilities under numerous provisions of Communications Act's accessibility mandates. Moreover, the Commission carries the crucial responsibility of fostering an environment that encourages the use of existing technology, while simultaneously promoting the advancement of improved, innovative solutions. The essence of these provisions is clear: the Commission's policies must ensure effective communication for Americans with disabilities when new technologies and services make such access achievable.

Further, as the Commission considers measures to improve customer service communications and usability delivered by entities under its jurisdiction, it needs to also ensure that customer service personnel are appropriately trained to communicate effectively with consumers with disabilities and to address their accessibility-related needs in a respectful, accurate, patient, and effective manner. Improving customer service accessibility requires not only language proficiency and effective communication practices, but also meaningful disability competency, flexibility, and an understanding of the real-world accessibility barriers consumers with disabilities continue to encounter when seeking assistance.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Commission as it seeks input on how to improve customer service experiences and protect consumers' sensitive personal information, and we look forward to working with the Commission to achieve this objective for all Americans with disabilities.

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COMMENTS OF THE ACCESSIBILITY ORGANIZATIONS

I. Introduction.

TDIforAccess, Inc., Deaf Equality, American Council of the Blind (“ACB”), Perkins School for the Blind, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Technology Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center at Gallaudet University (“DHH-RERC”), Hearing Loss Association of America (“HLAA”), Deaf Seniors of America (“DSA”), Communication Service for the Deaf (“CSD”), the National Association of the Deaf (“NAD”), and the American Foundation for the Blind (“AFB”) (collectively, the “Accessibility Organizations”) submit these comments in response to the Federal Communications Commission’s (“Commission”) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”)¹ seeking comment on, among other things, rules and measures that would improve customer service experiences and communications and protect consumers’ sensitive personal information.² We

¹ *Improving Customer Service and Protecting Consumers Through Onshoring, et al.*, CG Docket Nos. 26-52, 17-59, 02-278, and 22-2, FCC 26-16 (rel. Mar. 27, 2026) (“*Onshoring NPRM*”).

² *Id.* ¶ 22.

appreciate such efforts and urge the Commission to ensure that any action it takes provides consumers with disabilities, including those who are Deaf, DeafDisabled, DeafBlind, Late-Deafened and Hard of Hearing, with the same level of clear and effective communication on customer service calls that it requires for other members of the general public, including by requiring the provision of Direct Video Calling (“DVC”) services during customer service interactions.³ We agree with the Commission that:

clear communication and mutual understanding is critical to the customer service experience. The ability of both the consumer and the customer service agent to understand one another while discussing consumer concerns is vital to providing meaningful customer service.⁴

DVC, a form of accessible customer service that is already in use by several enterprises across the United States, allows consumers who use American Sign Language (“ASL”) to communicate directly with ASL-fluent customer service representatives who have been trained to address their inquiries and resolve their problems.⁵ These representatives have the language skills, cultural experience (typically due to lived experiences if they themselves are Deaf) and familiarity with the relevant company’s offerings necessary to promptly address issues presented to them by Deaf customers. Further, a regular personal computer or laptop equipped with a camera can act as

³ We request that the Commission open a separate rulemaking to achieve this result. Such rulemaking can be used to adopt standards for the provision of DVC, as well as timelines to facilitate a phase-in of this service by companies under the Commission’s jurisdiction. As discussed below, we believe that the Commission not only has the authority, but also the obligation to require DVC under various provisions of the Commission governing telecommunications and video programming accessibility.

⁴ *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶ 25.

⁵ 47 C.F.R. § 64.601 (a) (16). The Commission’s rules refer to DVC as “direct video customer support,” and define it as a “telephone customer support operation that enables callers with hearing or speech disabilities to engage in real-time direct video communication in ASL with ASL speakers in a call center operation.” *See also Structure and Practices of the Video Relay Service Program, Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, CG Docket Nos. 10-51, 03-123, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 34 FCC Rcd 3396 (2019) (adopting rules to allow qualifying entities to access the FCC’s Telecommunications Relay Service Numbering Directory for the purpose of providing DVC). DVC is also sometimes called “direct video communication.”

the terminal for DVC calls, and the necessary software can be accessed at no cost.⁶ For these and the many reasons set forth below, DVC offers the best opportunity to provide ASL users with the most effective, efficient and private customer support.

II. The Commission’s efforts to improve customer service communications should extend to ensuring the availability of Direct Video Calling.

In emphasizing the need for clear communication between customers and call center agents, the Commission notes that “[t]here can be language, communication, and other barriers that make it difficult, if not impossible, for consumers to get a satisfactory resolution to their problem.”⁷ It further recognizes that “regional pronunciations and vocabulary [can] make [a] customer service interaction difficult to understand,”⁸ and maintains that establishing a baseline of language proficiency is “an important first step to ensuring effective communication.”⁹ Ultimately, it concludes, “effective customer service communication requires understanding of what the consumer is saying, including an understanding of tone, idiomatic expressions, and appreciation of the consumer’s cultural expectations around customer service.”¹⁰

All these considerations are equally true, if not more so, for communication between ASL users and customer service agents. That ASL is the primary form of communication for most Deaf Americans underscores the need for DVC availability, especially given that ASL is a visual

⁶ *ACE Direct*, Federal Communications Commission, <https://www.fcc.gov/ace/direct> (noting the availability of a free, open-source consumer-facing call center software provided by the Commission for use in both government organizations and private sector companies).

⁷ *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶ 1.

⁸ *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶ 9, fn. 12 (citing Ed Roshelm, *The Impact of Language Barriers on Customer Service*, Workplace Languages, <https://www.workplacelanguages.com/customer-service-language-barriers/>. In that article, Roshelm explains how miscommunication can lead to inaccurate information being given to consumers, or customers not getting the help they need, poor customer satisfaction resulting in a negative view of the company, inefficient workflows, and even a lack of teamwork and a employees feeling disengaged and “less likely to go the extra mile for customers.”).

⁹ *Id.* ¶ 10.

¹⁰ *Id.* ¶ 11.

language with its own grammar, syntax, idioms and cultural context that are distinct from English, a written and oral language.¹¹ When sign language interpreters are used to handle calls between ASL users and customer service personnel, the indirect communication that results is more prone to errors, miscommunications and delays.

Enabled through the proliferation of video communications using high-speed broadband and devices equipped with video cameras, DVC now allows those of us who rely on ASL as our primary language to have one-on-one conversations with trained ASL-fluent customer service representatives. Put simply, DVC allows us to have ownership of our conversations in our primary language, directly with these customer service agents who have been trained to respond to consumer concerns. Uniformly, consumers have praised DVC as a “transformative” service that finally achieves equal communication access and full inclusion.¹²

By offering a communications experience equal to voice telephone services, DVC empowers us to swiftly, efficiently, and effectively resolve matters such as:

- Purchasing or leasing products or services
- Upgrading or canceling services or subscriptions

¹¹ See generally *What is American Sign Language*, National Association of the Deaf, <https://www.nad.org/resources/american-sign-language/what-is-american-sign-language/>. For example, ASL uses a topic-comment syntax, as compared to the subject-object-verb syntax used in English.

¹² See e.g., Comments of Accessibility Advocacy Organizations at 6 (filed June 5, 2023) in response to *Petition by Communication Service for the Deaf on TRS Fund Support for Direct Video Calling*, Public Notice, DA No. 23-370, CG Docket Nos. 10-51 & 03-123 (May 5, 2023), released in response to the DVC Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Direct Video Calling Service, CG Docket Nos. 10-51 & 03-123 (filed Mar. 31, 2023); Comments of Paul Winfree (May 26, 2023) (DVC “will empower countless individuals who rely on ASL as their primary mode of communication, ensuring their equal access to critical services and enhancing their overall quality of life”); Comments of Louis Schwarz (filed May 26, 2023) (DVC is a way to ensure that Deaf people can access call centers “fully equally”; the FCC should bring this “fantastic service” to call centers across the U.S. because it allows users to “control the conversation in real time,” ensuring that “nothing will get lost in translation”); Comments of Dragan Jaksic (filed May 26) (noting that we are on the “cusp of redefining what equal access means” and referring to such “full accessibility” as a “breath of fresh air”); Comments of Jessica Kenney (filed May 26, 2023) (DVC is “true equity” that provides “culturally and linguistically-appropriate access”); Comments of Joshua Weinstein/That Deaf Spot (filed May 26, 2023) (DVC is “awesome” -- an innovative and inclusive idea); Comments of Bradley Gantt (filed June 5, 2023) (noting that DVC will help break down communication barriers and create a more inclusive environment for all customers”); Additional testimonials affirming the value of DVC appear elsewhere in these comments, all of which express high praise for DVC, including the capabilities and expertise of DVC customer service agents.

- Porting our phone numbers to a new provider
- Gaining a better understanding of pricing and contract terms to ensure we are getting the prices and services to which we agreed
- Managing and understanding our service plans, including video, cell phone, and broadband bundles
- Identifying accessibility features and functions on products and services
- Receiving technical assistance and troubleshooting glitches
- Arranging for in-person or on-line service calls
- Updating personal information in our customer accounts
- Obtaining information on benefits, rewards and penalties
- Clarifying or disputing charges, including billing inaccuracies and unexpected fees
- Shopping comparatively to select or change our providers¹³

In other words, DVC provides those of us who are ASL users with a truly equal opportunity to comprehend the complexities that typically accompany the selection of communications and video programming offerings that fall under the Commission’s jurisdiction. Given the availability of this technology and the underlying goals of this proceeding,¹⁴ it is time for DVC to be made a regular component of the customer service experience for ASL users.

a. TRS and VRS are critical accessibility services but have limitations and drawbacks in the context of customer service.

Before high-speed Internet broadband services existed, the only way for ASL users to communicate with customer service agents was through telecommunications relay services (“TRS”), which are overseen by the Commission.¹⁵ While initially TRS was designed to connect TTY users with hearing individuals over analog telephone lines, around the year 2000, broadband-based innovations introduced advanced forms of TRS that are Internet-based. These included video

¹³ See *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶¶ 36-37 (seeking comment on the scope of covered calls). We urge that DVC be made available where the Commission adopts rule changes to achieve effective communication between customer service agents and consumers.

¹⁴ *Id.* ¶¶ 1-3.

¹⁵ Congress mandated TRS in the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, codified at 47 U.S.C. §225. Prior to then, TTY users could only communicate by telephone when both parties to the call had a TTY, which typically was not the case for most people, businesses or government agencies. The purpose of the TRS program, which went into effect in 1993, was to bridge this gap by using third party intermediaries to relay messages back and forth between the parties to a telephone call, alternating between text and voice as needed.

relay services (“VRS”), through which ASL users can communicate with their called parties through sign language interpreters (for purposes of these comments, “video interpreters”).¹⁶ By speaking everything that the ASL user signs, and signing back responses from the other party on the call, VRS offers a vast improvement over TTYs and other text-based forms of TRS, which caused long delays while conversations were typed out. For a long time, VRS was the most effective way for ASL users to communicate with customer service centers. However, like TTY-based TRS, VRS remains an indirect form of communication. Those of us who are ASL users should have the choice to use modern video conferencing technologies so we can engage directly with customer service representatives, rather than relying exclusively on relay services, which can create barriers to clear and effective customer service interactions. These barriers can arise in several ways.

For example, video interpreters vary widely in their ability to understand different ASL styles, depending on their training and backgrounds, including their familiarity with Deaf language and culture. In addition, as with any language, there is considerable variation in the way that ASL users express themselves. Sign language “accents” or styles can depend on factors such as geographic location, age, ethnicity and culture – each of which can influence one’s use of phrases, speed, gestures, hand movements, body positioning, and choice of signs.¹⁷ For these reasons,

¹⁶ *Telecommunications Relay Services and Speech-to-Speech Services for Individuals with Hearing and Speech Disabilities*, Report and Order and Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, 15 FCC Rcd 5140 ¶¶ 22, 26 (2000) (approving VRS as a compensable form of TRS).

¹⁷ See *Deaf Culture | Sign Language “Accents” or “Styles”*, Start ASL, <https://www.startasl.com/sign-language-accents-or-styles>; Maria Dipasquale, *Don’t Miss the Signs: Regional Accents in Sign Language*, Publishing Solutions Group (Mar. 31, 2015), <https://publishingsolutionsgroup.com/blog/dont-miss-the-signs-regional-accents-in-sign-language>.

communication through a VRS interpreter can increase the opportunity for errors and misunderstandings.

Video interpreters also approach each call cold – without background on the content of the conversation or the relevant business’s operations. By contrast, DVC uses ASL-fluent customer service agents who have been trained to handle a company’s substantive issues, which increases the accuracy and security of the calls they handle. While relay services remain important for many phone interactions,¹⁸ for calls in which customer assistance is provided, DVC affords those of us who are Deaf the autonomy, dignity and privacy to make our own telephone calls in our own language – just as hearing customers have when communicating in their own language. This is because most DVC call center agents typically are themselves Deaf, and so they are more familiar with subtle differences in sign language, including regional ASL “accents,” as well as the nuances of Deaf culture that can affect a call’s handling and resolution. The bottom line is that having words translated through a third person, such as a video interpreter, can result in communication barriers that can significantly increase frustration and impede the accuracy, speed, and effectiveness of our calls. Those of us who are ASL users should not be limited to only one option where our words are funneled through a third party when trying to get information, resolve issues, and make informed purchasing decisions. DVC provides us with a communication experience that is parallel to voice telephone services and therefore should be an option when communicating with customer service entities under the FCC’s jurisdiction.

We agree with the Commission that customer service operations by communication providers are in need of significant improvement in their delivery of services to the general public.

¹⁸ For example, VRS remains necessary for calls between ASL users and friends, family, or fellow workers, where DVC is not possible or practical.

However, the frustrations experienced by voice telephone users (even when communicating with people located in the United States) pale in comparison to the exasperation that ASL users experience. Unlike hearing people, who—after going through a long and bothersome series of prompts—can eventually speak directly with a customer service agent, we do not have that right. With the exception of only a handful of companies, the vast majority of communications and video programming companies under the Commission’s jurisdiction have yet to provide to our community customer service agents who can communicate in our language – ASL.

The long delays that can result from relay service also impede the prompt and effective resolution of our issues. The Commission has rightly emphasized the importance of minimizing consumer wait times in the context of customer service relations.¹⁹ It should similarly recognize – and take action to address – the exceedingly long wait times that ASL users experience when contacting customer service through VRS. Commission rules only require 80% of all VRS calls to be answered within 120 seconds, measured on a monthly basis.²⁰ As a result, ASL users frequently face significant delays before they can even begin a customer service interaction. These delays result in unequal treatment and consequently a lower level of access than consumers who can communicate directly with call center agents. Each time we must wait for a video interpreter, each time we are put on hold for our calls to connect a relay call, and each time we or the center’s agent are asked by the interpreter to clarify a point, time is lost, opportunities for errors increase, and our independence is compromised. Each time we are denied the right to select the option for a one-on-

¹⁹ See *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶¶ 41, 44 (proposing to require prompt transfers to U.S. based call centers to ensure minimal wait times after transfer requests are received, and seeking comment on whether to require disclosures about such wait times).

²⁰ 47 CFR § 64.604.

one conversation on our own, it reminds us that we are being treated differently than everyone else.

b. Text-based customer service options can supplement but not provide a substitute for direct video communication for ASL users.

Text-based customer service communication methods may be suitable – and even sometimes preferred – by some individuals whose primary language is English, but chat, email, and other text-based methods of communication related to customer service issues are largely inadequate for Deaf and other individuals with disabilities whose primary language is ASL.²¹

As noted, ASL is the primary method of communication for Deaf Americans – it is also in many instances our first language. Just as one would expect a non-native speaker to experience difficulties arising from using a secondary language, we have the same difficulties when having to rely on text-based communications. As Deaf Americans, we routinely experience anxiety, stress, and frustration when having to move from our primary form of communication to a less familiar communication medium. Moreover, empirical evidence shows that DVC provides more efficient, fluid, and quick communication for ASL users than typing-based interactions.²² We urge the Commission to take into consideration the potential barriers that text-based communications can pose for ASL users as the Commission develops policies to improve customer service experiences. Relying primarily on text-based customer service communications has the potential to leave us without access to customer service in our own language.

²¹ See *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶¶ 52, 62 (discussing the routine use of text-based communication methods for customer service experiences).

²² *Petition for Declaratory Ruling Regarding Direct Video Calling Service*, Communication Service for the Deaf, CG Docket Nos. 10-51 and 03-123, at 8-11 (filed Mar. 31, 2023), <https://www.fcc.gov/ecfs/document/103310754209479/1>.

c. DVC can improve the security and privacy of sensitive personal information.

The Commission explains that the failure to protect consumers' sensitive personal information and the lack of data security in foreign call centers is a matter of both individual privacy and national security.²³ For those of us who use ASL, these security and privacy concerns on customer service calls are heightened.

While the Communications Act and FCC rules require the confidentiality of communications that take place over TRS and VRS,²⁴ we can experience discomfort and a sense of intrusion when having to communicate sensitive and personal information, such as Social Security numbers, medical data, and financial information, through a third-party. Being able to communicate directly with customer service agents in ASL protects our confidentiality and reduces the opportunity for errors when such sensitive information is shared by phone. By affording the option to provide sensitive information directly to customer service representatives without going through a video interpreter, DVC optimizes the accuracy, speed and privacy of communications, and increases customer confidence at a time when incidents of fraud are on the rise.

With DVC, these privacy concerns are significantly reduced due to the limited nature of call participants and the presence of familiar, well-trained ASL-fluent representatives supporting DVC. We seek the right to provide our confidential information directly and on our own terms to customer service representatives who understand us and who are better equipped to safeguard our privacy.

²³ See *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶¶ 2, 14, 54, 56.

²⁴ 47 U.S.C. § 225(d)(1)(F); 47 C.F.R. §64.604 (a)(2).

d. Increasing DVC availability encourages employment opportunities for Deaf Americans.

Lastly, an added benefit of DVC is its potential to produce additional U.S. jobs for Deaf Americans who are native ASL users, a segment of the population that both remains underemployed and experiences various disparities in the labor force, including pay inequality.²⁵ By creating more opportunities for the Deaf community, the Commission can expand workforce participation and economic opportunity while allowing individuals to contribute our skills to the job market. This will have a positive effect on the economy as a whole, including increased creativity, improved problem-solving, and a wider range of perspectives, all of which can enhance productivity and economic growth. The Commission itself has pointed out that deploying DVC in a business entity can “increase[] the number of individuals with disabilities in the workplace, and heightens [an] entity’s profile with various disability communities.”²⁶

e. The Commission should require DVC as the default method for customer service communications with ASL users.

For all of the foregoing reasons, DVC offers the best available modern solution for communication between Deaf Americans who use ASL and customer service centers. Only DVC allows consumers to engage in customer service interactions through direct, two-way communication that parallels the experience available to voice telephone users. By eliminating the need for an intermediary, DVC promotes greater accuracy, efficiency, privacy and consumer autonomy.

²⁵ See *Supporting Deaf People: Closing the Employment Gap*, National Deaf Center (Oct. 27, 2023), <https://nationaldeafcenter.org/news-items/supporting-deaf-people-closing-the-employment-gap/> (reporting that only a little over 50% of Deaf Americans are employed, compared with 70 percent of the general population); Carrie Lou Garberoglio, et al., *Deaf People and Employment in the United States: 2019*, National Deaf Center (2019), https://nationaldeafcenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Deaf-People-and-Employment-in-the-United-States_-2019-7.26.19ENGLISHWEB.pdf.

²⁶ *Direct Video Calling Primer, The Essentials in Adopting Direct Videoconferencing Telecommunications*, Federal Communications Commission, at 9 (2017), <https://www.fcc.gov/file/13008/download>.

At the same time, we wish to make clear that our objective is not to eliminate other communication options that consumers might prefer or require. TRS and VRS remain essential accessibility tools and must continue to be available when needed. Rather, we urge the Commission to take steps to establish DVC as the default method for customer service for companies subject to its jurisdiction, with relay services serving as an option when direct communication is unavailable or impracticable. This approach will ensure our community has access to the most effective and reliable means of communicating with customer service representatives. In doing so, the Commission will advance its longstanding commitment to ensuring that people with disabilities have communication access that is equal to service available to the general public.

III. The Commission Should Address Other Broader Accessibility Considerations in Customer Service Environments.

While these comments primarily focus on the importance of DVC and ASL-fluent customer service agents, accessibility barriers within customer service environments can also significantly impact consumers who are blind, low vision, DeafBlind, older adults, or those who have other disabilities. In many situations, these individuals have no choice but to contact customer service specifically because a company's website, application, or digital platform is itself inaccessible. When customer service personnel are not equipped to effectively communicate with such consumers or address accessibility-related support needs, these individuals are left without meaningful alternatives to resolve their concerns and obtain assistance. As the Commission considers measures to improve customer service communications and usability delivered by entities under its jurisdiction, it needs to also ensure that customer service personnel are appropriately trained to communicate effectively with consumers with disabilities and to address their accessibility-related needs in a respectful, accurate, patient, and effective manner. When

agents lack the cultural experience and familiarity to effectively communicate with people with disabilities, barriers in communication are compounded. Unfortunately, this can result in losing patience and failing to act respectfully when communicating with a customer who has a disability.

To prevent these barriers, relevant considerations include:

- Providing disability competency and disability etiquette training for customer service personnel
- Understanding barriers impacting blind, low vision, DeafBlind, older adult, and multi-disabled consumers
- Ensuring representatives are able to communicate beyond rigid scripted interactions and can respond flexibly to unforeseen accessibility-related questions
- Providing effective verbal descriptions and non-visual guidance when assisting blind or low vision consumers
- Assisting consumers in navigating inaccessible websites, applications, and digital systems
- Avoiding visual-only instructions that may not be usable by blind or low vision consumers
- Acquiring an understanding of how limited English proficiency, unclear speech, or communication barriers may significantly impact disability-related customer support interactions
- Providing patience, clarity, and flexibility when supporting older adults and consumers with combined hearing and vision loss
- Understanding the need for accessible explanations, keyboard navigation guidance, and step-by-step nonvisual instruction methods
- Encouraging customer service environments that meaningfully support consumers with disabilities seeking alternatives to inaccessible digital systems
- Recognizing the value of employing individuals with disabilities within customer support environments given their lived experience and understanding of accessibility barriers

Ultimately, improving customer service accessibility requires not only language proficiency and effective communication practices, but also meaningful disability competency, flexibility, patience, and an understanding of the real-world accessibility barriers consumers with disabilities continue to encounter when seeking assistance.

IV. The Commission has the Authority and Obligation to Require DVC and Other Measures to Ensure Accessible and Usable Customer Service.

We believe the Commission not only has the authority, but also the obligation to adopt measures that improve customer service experience for people with disabilities. The Commission's authority to promote and even require DVC availability and other accessibility features by providers and customer service centers largely stems from the Communications Act's accessibility mandates, namely sections 225, 255, 303, and 716. Among other things, the Commission carries the crucial responsibility of fostering an environment that encourages the use of existing technology, while simultaneously promoting the advancement of improved, innovative solutions.²⁷

Section 255 requires telecommunications manufacturers and service providers to make their products and services "usable" by people with disabilities if readily achievable:²⁸ Commission rules implementing this section define "usable" to require that "individuals with disabilities be *given access to the full* functionality and documentation for products, including instructions, product information (including accessible feature information), documentation, bills, and *technical support which is provided to individuals without disabilities.*"²⁹

The rules go on to require these manufacturers and service providers to ensure access to "product support communications regarding both the product in general and the accessibility features of the product," and mandate that manufacturers take such other readily achievable steps

²⁷ Americans with Disabilities Act, Pub. L. No. 101-336, 104 Stat. 328 (1990), codified at 47 U.S.C. § 225 (a) (3). See also 47 U.S.C. § 157 (a).

²⁸ 47 U.S.C. §255 (b) (governing manufacturers); 47 U.S.C. §255 (c) (governing service providers).

²⁹ 47 C.F.R § 6.3 (l) (emphasis added).

as necessary, including . . .” ensuring usable customer support and technical support in the call centers and service centers which support their products at no additional charge.³⁰

Similarly, Section 716 of the Act requires advanced communications service (“ACS”) providers and equipment manufacturers to make their customer information and documentation accessible to people with disabilities unless it is not achievable.³¹ To be usable, the Commission’s rules require that people with disabilities have access “to the full functionality and documentation for the product, including instructions, product information (including accessible feature information), documentation, bills, and technical support functionally equivalent to that provided to individuals without disabilities.³² The ACS rules further make clear that information and documentation includes, but it is not limited to user guides, bills, installation guides for end-user devices, and product support communications.³³ This requirement, similar to the rules applicable to telecommunications services, requires that “individuals with disabilities be able to access, at no extra cost, *call centers and customer support* regarding both the product generally and the accessibility features of the product.”³⁴

³⁰ 47 C.F.R. § 6.11 (a) (3) (emphasis added). A separate rule requires telecommunications manufacturers and service providers, in developing training programs, to consider “the means of communicating with individuals with disabilities.” 47 C.F.R. § 6.11 (c) (2).

³¹ 47 U.S.C. § 716; 47 C.F.R. §§ 14.20 (a) (1) & (2), (d). Such information and documentation includes user guides, bills, installation guides for end-user installable devices, and product support communications, regarding both the product in general and the accessibility features of the product.

³² 47 C.F.R. § 14.21 (c).

³³ *Id.* § 14.20 (d).

³⁴ *Id.* (emphasis added).

Various other Commission rules and federal law governing or concerning the scope of this proceeding³⁵ contain support for the Commission's authority to promote and mandate the availability of DVC.³⁶

V. Conclusion.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the Commission as it seeks input on how to improve customer service experiences and protect consumers' sensitive personal information. As do all consumers, we need to be able to resolve our concerns and receive prompt assistance in our own language, to ensure accuracy and protect our security and privacy to the same extent as everyone else. We look forward to working with the Commission to achieve this objective for all Americans with disabilities.

³⁵ See *Onshoring NPRM*, ¶ 23.

³⁶ See, e.g., 47 U.S.C. § 619; Pub. L. No. 111-260, 124 Stat. 2751, § 205 (2010), codified at 47 U.S.C. § 303 (bb); 47 C.F.R. § 79.108; 47 U.S.C. § 303 (aa) (1).

Respectfully Submitted,

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Dated: June 2, 2026