

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

June 23, 2020

The Honorable Ajit Pai  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12th Street SW  
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Chairman Pai:

As the co-chairs of the Bipartisan Disabilities Caucus, we write to express our concerns surrounding the recent decision of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to conditionally approve a solution for Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) that relies only on automatic speech recognition (ASR). While we appreciate your actions to ensure that telecommunications relay services (TRS) continue to be available during the COVID-19 pandemic, we must ensure that the level of IP CTS is not diminished during this time of unprecedented remote communication.

As you know, many Americans use IP CTS for real-time captioning of conversations, and IP CTS currently uses human communications assistants to ensure quality and accuracy. However, in June 2018, the FCC determined that ASR-only is a permissible method of delivering IP CTS based in part on research by the MITRE Corporation. The research was split into two phases, with Phase 1 examining a baseline of IP CTS Services and Phase 2 testing existing ASR technologies. However, both Phase 1 and Phase 2 used small sample sizes when testing services, and the results were not subject to peer-review. Additionally, advocates are concerned that the lab conditions utilized were not reflective of real-life communications. When measuring user comprehension results in lab conditions, ASR-only technology at its best showed “no significant differences between its score and three of the IP CTS device scores,”<sup>1</sup> and at its weakest performed “significantly worse than all IP CTS devices.”<sup>2</sup>

In the absence of additional research, we are unconvinced that ASR-only services meet the functional equivalence standard required by the ADA. User comprehension when utilizing IP CTS services is vital for daily activities – whether a user is filling a prescription, communicating with coworkers, or keeping in contact with family. Our concerns surrounding ASR-only providers are compounded by the lack of accuracy standards in place for ASR-only services. We

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<sup>1</sup> <https://ecfsapi.fcc.gov/file/10411287298464/MITRE%20Corporation%20Summary%20of%20Phase%202.pdf>

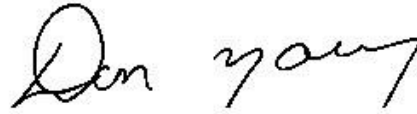
<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

understand that technology is advancing, but until measures are put in place to ensure that ASR-only solutions comply with the ADA, we strongly urge the FCC to reconsider its approval of ASR-only providers.

Sincerely,



JIM LANGEVIN  
Member of Congress



DON YOUNG  
Member of Congress

cc:

Hon. Commissioner Michael O’Rielly  
Hon. Commissioner Brendan Carr  
Hon. Commissioner Jessica Rosenworcel  
Hon. Commissioner Geoffrey Starks