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September 13, 2022

Federal Communications Commission  
45 L Street N.E.  
Washington, DC 20002

To Whom It May Concern,

The Hearing Loss Association of America (HLAA) supports the concept of Project IRIS, spearheaded by the Center on Access Technology at the National Technical Institute for the Deaf at Rochester Institute of Technology. Project IRIS collaborates with industry partners to improve the calling function of mobile devices for consumers with hearing loss, both deaf and hard of hearing, by connecting the native dialer pad directly to telecommunications relay service (TRS) providers. Deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers will be able to activate the one-phone-number solution by enabling TRS and choosing their preferred TRS provider in the phone's accessibility settings.

Currently, Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS) and video relay service (VRS) providers assign users multiple phone numbers for accessible calls. This can lead to confusion in identifying which phone number to send a text or call for personal and professional use. To resolve these difficulties, the IRIS team works with industry partners to provide TRS users the option to place calls on their mobile devices with integrated TRS support. This solution which Project IRIS promotes will streamline the process of placing calls, relieve undue burden on consumers with hearing loss, and make their calling experience tantamount to that of hearing callers.

With Project IRIS, industry partners will provide users with hearing loss the equivalent calling experience as hearing users; they will be able to make accessible calls within the native phone protocol of any smartphone without the need to obtain multiple phone numbers, download several over-the-top apps, and hold separate contact lists. By empowering users to choose their preferred TRS providers, Project IRIS will present growth in which IP CTS and VRS companies can compete.

Consumers with hearing loss should not be burdened with maintaining multiple phone numbers, downloading several apps, and holding separate contact lists. They must have the ability to place calls with the same ease as hearing consumers. With assistance from the IRIS team, mobile carriers, TRS providers, and a technology company will work together to achieve the one-number solution for all deaf and hard-of-hearing consumers.

The Hearing Loss Association of America is a nonprofit organization whose mission is to open the world of communication to people with hearing loss through information, education, support and advocacy. We encourage the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to continue and support this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Barbara Kelley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Barbara Kelley  
Executive Director