

**STATEMENT OF
CHAIRMAN AJIT PAI**

Re: *Access to Telecommunications Equipment and Services by Persons with Disabilities, CG Docket No. 13-46; Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets, WT Docket No. 07-250; Comment Sought on 2010 Review of Hearing Aid Compatibility Regulations, WT Docket No. 10-254*

Ensuring that all Americans have access to communications is a top priority for this Commission. This extends to those in the hard-of-hearing community.

Approximately 13% of all Americans, or over 38 million people, are deaf or hard-of-hearing.¹ According to a new study from Johns Hopkins University, the number of Americans aged 20 and older who have hearing loss is expected to nearly double over the next 43 years.² Another report projects this number to rise “from 44.1 million people in 2020 dealing with ‘moderate or greater’ hearing loss (15% of people 20 and up) to 73.5 million in 2060 (22.6% [of people 20 and up]).”³

Our decision here tackles this trend head-on. It improves the measurement of volume control in wireline phones, extends hearing aid compatibility requirements for wireline phones to consumer equipment for advanced communications services, and includes a volume control requirement for wireless phones. Given that a significant percentage of respondents to a 2014 survey reported dissatisfaction with handset volume controls,⁴ this *Report and Order* will go a long way to addressing a glaring problem.

Thanks to the staff that contributed to this item: to Robert Aldrich, Susan Bahr, Suzy Rosen Singleton, Karen Peltz Strauss, and Patrick Webre from the Consumer and Governmental Affairs Bureau; to David Horowitz, Bill Richardson, and Anjali Singh from the Office of General Counsel; to Rashmi Doshi, Patrick Forster, William Hurst, Bruce Romano, and Jim Szeliga from the Office of Engineering and Technology; to Kirk Burgee and Cathy Zima from the Wireline Competition Bureau; to Saurbh Chhabra, Eli Johnson, Michael Rowan, and Peter Trachtenberg from the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau; and to Pamera Hairston, Jeremy Marcus, and Daniel Meyerson from the Enforcement Bureau.

¹ Gallaudet University Library, *Deaf Population of the U.S.*, <http://libguides.gallaudet.edu/content.php?pid=119476&sid=1029190> (last visited Oct. 18, 2017).

² Meera Jagannathan, *U.S. Adults with Hearing Loss Projected to Nearly Double from 2020 to 2060* (Mar. 2, 2017), <http://www.nydailynews.com/life-style/health/u-s-adults-hearing-loss-projected-double-article-1.2986829>.

³ *Id.*, citing Adele M. Goman, Nicholas S. Reed, & Frank R. Lin, *Addressing Estimated Hearing Loss in Adults in 2060*, *Journal of the American Medical Association Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery* (July 2017).

⁴ *Access to Telecommunications Equipment and Services by Persons with Disabilities et al.*, CG Docket No. 13-46, WT Docket Nos. 07-250 and 10-254, Report and Order and Order on Reconsideration, para. 24 n.90 (Oct. 26, 2017) (citing a research survey conducted by the Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center for Wireless Technologies and the Center for Advanced Communications Policy, Georgia Institute of Technology (Wireless RERC)).