

**STATEMENT OF
COMMISSIONER BRENDAN CARR**

Re: *Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Standards for Hearing Aid-Compatible Handsets*, WT Docket No. 20-3; *Amendment of the Commission's Rules Governing Hearing Aid-Compatible Mobile Handsets*, WT Docket No. 07-250 (terminated); *Comment Sought on 2010 Review of Hearing Aid Compatibility Regulations*, WT Docket No. 10-254 (terminated)

The Technology Access Program at Gallaudet University is one of the world's leading centers for research into technology for deaf and hard of hearing consumers. TAP is only a few minutes from FCC headquarters, and so I thought it would be useful this week as we begin updating our hearing aid compatibility rules to take the short trip to Gallaudet to learn from the experts on accessibility technology.

It was clear immediately how technology has transformed accessibility. To assist our conversation, Dr. Christian Vogler, the director of TAP, had a real-time transcription app open on his phone. It transcribed the words we were saying flawlessly and in real time. This functionality can be a huge help if interpreters aren't available or if a person is speaking very quickly, for example. Dr. Vogler said that the increasing use of texting and improved app interfaces—many of which he has contributed to—make everyday communication fluid.

But sometimes texting isn't sufficient. Dr. Vogler relayed an experience we've all had: you're exchanging texts with someone and then, suddenly, there's no response. No three dots. No "BRB." Nothing. You need an answer, and so you follow up with a one character text—a question mark. Still, nothing. At those frustrating moments, Dr. Vogler—and I'd suggest any of us—just wants to pick up the phone and get an answer.

It's not always that easy, however, for users of hearing aids. The radio frequencies on which mobile phones transmit can cause interference. Volume control, or the perceived volume and sound of a call, also can be a problem area. For persons using hearing aids, sound can be heard as loud and then soft, and its somewhat common for the low frequencies to drop off, making a call sound tinny or tough to follow.

With today's Notice, we propose to address many of those problems by adopting the latest international standard for hearing aid compatibility. The standard will help ensure that new 5G phones are hearing aid compliant. It will include volume control specifications that improve call quality. And for the first time, it will harmonize the European and American tests for RF interference to hearing aids. This will eliminate duplicative review while also raising the standard. The efficiencies should result in lower costs for hearing aid manufacturers and users.

Today's Notice also gives us a chance to correct a small misstep the FCC took in 2017. Back then, I dissented from our decision to adopt a new volume control standard because the relevant standards-setting bodies had not completed their work. I argued that our decision put the cart before the horse and would likely require us to launch a second proceeding once the standards groups completed their work. We are now launching that new proceeding and proposing to adjust the 2017 compliance schedule we adopted accordingly, which is the right move.

The wonders of the mobile world we live in should be open to all. Technologists and the research team at Gallaudet are focused on making that goal a reality for the deaf and hard of hearing communities. I want to thank them for their dedication, and I want to thank the Wireless Telecommunications Bureau for its work on this item. It has my support.