In Powerful New Film, Deaf Leaders and Advocate Sherri Turpin Urge Hearing Allies, Policy Leaders, and the Federal Communications Commission to Stand Boldly With the Deaf Community to Deliver Communications Equity

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“Stand With The Deaf Community” Global Petition Invites Public Support, Encourages Federal Action to Close Communications Inequities Gap.

May 2, 2023 (Austin, TX) – A powerful new film (https://www.globalthoughtleaders.org/articles/listen-educate-take-action-communication-is-a-human-right) has debuted calling for hearing allies, policy leaders and the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to stand boldly with and for the deaf and hard of hearing community and help deliver the communications equity promised decades ago by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The film, announced by ZP Better Together, is featured on TBD Media Group’s “Global Thought Leaders” and CBSNews.com.

To view an American Sign Language interpretation of this press release please visit Stand With The Deaf Community (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9wk2IH9jtlM).

The film features several prominent deaf leaders and activists – Greg Hlibok, Storm Smith, Warren “Wawa” Snipe, and Chris Wagner – who in addition to sharing their own personal experiences call for the hearing community and federal government to take action and eliminate the significant inequities and communications gaps that still exist today for deaf individuals. Also featured in the film is leading ally and community advocate Sherri Turpin, CEO of ZP Better Together.

The film also launched a supporting global StandWithTheDeafCommunity (https://standwiththedeafcommunity.nationbuilder.com/) petition, inviting public support and urging federal action at the FCC to ensure the deaf community’s fundamental right to equal communications access.

“We cannot afford to wait any longer,” said Greg Hlibok. “The FCC’s Video Relay Service (VRS) program is broken and out of touch with today’s realities because it does not allow for the investment necessary to address the communications inequities. The FCC must not delay its obligation to close these gaps and deliver the communications equity promised decades ago.”

The eight-minute film is designed to more fully educate the hearing audience and policy leaders about some of the very specific and longstanding communications inequities. These include needing to have two phone numbers – one for texting and one for video relay calls – and also the inability of E911 emergency services to locate deaf people the same way they do hearing people.

In the film, Hlibok, Smith, Snipe and Wagner all pointedly ask hearing viewers to listen more, to put themselves in their shoes, to stand together with the deaf community and make a greater impact for today’s deaf community and for future generations.

“Imagine yourself in our shoes,” says Chris Wagner. “It could be your family member, it could be

your child, your neighbor, your friend, a colleague. This impacts all of our lives. This is not just deaf people. This is all of us."

The film is part of the special CBSNews.com series "Innovation & Disruption Leaders," which profiles global leaders who are set to shape future business environments and societies of tomorrow. TBD Media Group (https://www.tbdmediagroup.com/) produced the film.

"I have said it a million times," said Turpin. "The program is broken and it is long past time that the deaf and hard of hearing community has full and equal communications access, the very same access that the hearing community takes for granted each and every day. The ADA promised this more than 30 years ago and the deaf community has been fighting for this equity for more than a decade. We need more hearing allies to stand boldly with us and ensure true communications equity for the deaf community once and for all."

To sign the petition please visit StandWithTheDeafCommunity (https://standwiththedeafcommunity.nationbuilder.com/).

To watch the film please visit Listen (https://www.globalthoughtleaders.org/articles/listen-educate-take-action-communication-is-a-human-right).

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