



GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY BOARD FOR
TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY

MARTIN O'MALLEY
Governor

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

ANTHONY BROWN
Lieutenant Governor

January 1, 2014

The Honorable Thomas V. Mike Miller, Jr.
President
Senate of Maryland
H-107, State House
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Michael E. Busch
Speaker
House of Delegates
H-101, State House
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Dear President Miller and Speaker Busch:

In accordance with 3A-503(d) of the State Finance and Procurement Article, I am pleased to submit the annual Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR) report for calendar year 2013.

The members of GABTR, Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) staff, and representatives from the current Maryland Relay provider met in various Maryland counties twice in 2013. During these public meetings, discussions were held regarding quality and trends in relay services, technology, current outreach efforts and future outreach needs to ensure that Maryland citizens are aware of the services provided by the State of Maryland. During GABTR meetings, TAM staff provides information related to regulatory updates from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) that may impact TAM's future fiscal and/or operational obligations for current and newer modes of relay.

The interactive structure of the GABTR meetings allows for maximum feedback from consumers as well as the dissemination of vital information to citizens who are now, or could be, users of Maryland Relay. This venue further allows GABTR and TAM to solicit feedback on the quality of service and the communications needs of the deaf, hard of hearing and speech-disabled communities. These communities are served through our Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) – Maryland Relay, the Maryland Captioned Telephone Relay Service, NewsLine Reading Service for the Blind and the Maryland Accessible Telecommunication (MAT) equipment distribution program, all of which are managed by TAM.

As reported last year, during the 2012 Legislative session, the State Finance and Procurement Article – Section 3-A-501-606 changed the remittance wording to state that “Communications Companies” will remit to the USTF Fund on a per account rather than a per land-line basis.

Of further note is the fact that communication companies are defined as landline service, wireless or cellular telephone service and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) which widens the base of remitters.

Due to the wider remittance base, in November 2013, the Universal Service Trust fund (USTF) surcharge was reduced from \$.18 to \$.11 per account by the Public Service Commission (PSC). This lower amount currently covers the cost of the programs provided by DoIT/TAM.

On August 26, 2013, the FCC issued a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking that raises the issue of the possibility of the cost of Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone service being transferred to State programs. This would be a significant increase in the fiscal outlay required for the provision of TRS in the State of Maryland and would likely require an increase in the USTF surcharge.

Keeping these issues in the forefront, GABTR looks forward to working with the TAM office to continue providing exemplary services to the citizens of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Betty Jean Dodds

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

cc: The Honorable Isabelle FitzGerald, Secretary, DoIT
Patrick Frank, Policy Analyst, DLS
Stacia L. Cropper, Deputy State CIO, Administration
Lynn Duleh-Buehler, Director, Fiscal Services
Brenda Kelly-Frey, Director, TAM