



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR & INDUSTRY
ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING

Russ Goddard, Chairperson
c/o Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
1521 North Sixth Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102
717-783-4912 V/TTY
717-783-4913 Fax

June 22, 2015

Mrs. Rosemary Chiavetta
Secretary
Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission
P.O. Box 3265
Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265

RE: Docket No. P-2015-2484229 – Petition of the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry, Office of Vocational rehabilitation, Telecommunication Device Distribution Program Proposal for Pilot Project – Wireless Expansion Initiative

Dear Secretary Chiavetta:

We, the Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (Council), are writing to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission, to express our support for the Petition of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR), Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry (L&I), that seeks to implement the Wireless Expansion Initiative (Wireless Initiative) pilot project within the context of the existing telecommunication device distribution program (TDDP). The Council believes that this pilot project will be of benefit to eligible Pennsylvanians with disabilities, and the Council urges the Commission to approve the Petition and the associated funding of the pilot project from the Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) fund.

The proposed pilot project is an essential first step toward assisting eligible Pennsylvanians with the devices necessary to enhance their independent living skills, ensure access to emergency services, and increase their employability in the workforce. A number of states in the Union have already started to distribute wireless devices through their telecommunication device distribution programs. This pilot project would ensure that Pennsylvania enters the 21st

century with relevant technology that is more easily available to Pennsylvanians who need it the most.

In addition, the wireless pilot project will be actively managed by the Institute on Disabilities at Temple University, a provider that has considerable expertise in administering TDDP on behalf of OVR, among other programs. The proposed pilot project is also compatible with existing and applicable statutory requirements of Pennsylvania law, and its budget would not impose an unreasonable or inequitable burden on the existing TRS Fund mechanism.

In sum, the Council believes that the approval of the Petition and the implementation of the Wireless Initiative pilot project will usher a new and better era of communication capabilities for eligible persons with disabilities in Pennsylvania. For these reasons, the Council respectfully urges the Commission to approve the Petition and the relevant request for supporting the Wireless Initiative pilot project budget through the available financial resources of the TRS fund mechanism.

Sincerely,



Russ Goddard
Chairperson
Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Cc: Nancy Kingsley, ACDHH Secretary
Chairman Gladys M. Brown, PA PUC
Vice Chairman John F. Coleman, PA PUC
Commissioner Pamela A. Witmer, PA PUC
Commissioner Robert F. Powelson, PA PUC

Kathryn G. Sophy, deputy Chief Counsel, Law Bureau, PA PUC
Louise Fink Smith, Law Bureau, PA PUC
Eric V. Jeschke, Bureau of technical Utility Services, PA PUC