



**GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY BOARD FOR
TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY**

MARTIN O'MALLEY
Governor

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

ANTHONY BROWN
Lieutenant Governor

January 1, 2013

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 2012.

The members of GABTR, Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) staff, and representatives from the current Maryland Relay provider – Hamilton Telephone Company, meet in various Maryland counties three times a year. During the 2012 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 Telecommunications Access 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, Deaf/Blind, Speech-Disabled, and Mobility Impaired 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 programs, all of which are managed by TAM.

In last year's Annual Report, the GABTR documented its concern for the future solvency of the Universal Service Trust Fund (USTF), the funding source for the TAM Programs as described in State Finance and Procurement Article – Section 3A-502.

This concern was based on the fact that only the Local Exchange Carriers (LECs) remitted to that fund. During the 2012 Legislative session, representatives from the TAM Office, myself, as Chair of GABTR, as well as other GABTR members, and concerned citizens, wrote letters and attended the hearings on SB 746 and HB 1087 relating to the funding of these programs. The result of these efforts was a change to State Finance and Procurement Article – Sections 3A-501 – 606 that governs all TAM programs. The change to the TAM funding source now states that "Communications Companies" will remit to the USTF Fund for communication services which include: landline services, wireless or cellular telephone service; and Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) on a per account rather than a per subscriber line basis.

This change in revenue stream ensures that as time goes on, the funding will be more equitably shared between all citizens of Maryland who have access to TAM programs.

GABTR looks forward to working with the TAM office to continue to provide exemplary services to the citizens of Maryland.

Sincerely,

Betty Jean Dodds

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

cc: The Honorable Elliot H. Schlanger, Secretary, DoIT
Patrick Frank, Policy Analyst, DLS
Stacia L. Cropper, Chief Operating Officer
Lynn Duleh-Buehler, Director, Fiscal Services
Brenda Kelly-Frey, Director, TAM