ROUGH DRAFT TRANSCRIPT

**Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay**

**Board Meeting**

Held on Zoom

July 16, 2020

9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

*CART CAPTIONING PROVIDED BY:*

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**Governor’s Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay**

**Board Meeting**

**July 16, 2020**

**GABTR BOARD MEMBERS:**

Jason Corning

Betty Dodds

Deirdre Lynch

Kenneth Putkovich

Alex Simmons

Darrin Smith

Alfred Sonnenstrahl, Chair

**HAMILTON STAFF:**

Tarita Turner

**TAM STAFF:**

David Bahar, Director

Donna Broadway-Callaman

Travis Dougherty

Kevin Steffy

Jenny Pearson

**MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF DISABILITIES:**

John Brennan, Deputy Assistant Secretary

**ASL INTERPRETERS:**

Bradley Christlieb

Billy Kendrick

Stephan Kennedy

Anne Leahy

Anna Rose

**CART CAPTIONER:**

Claire Baldi

**GABTR Meeting**

**July 16, 2020**

**9:00 a.m.**

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: All righty then. I do want to let everyone know that today's meeting will be accessible to the public via Facebook. And I would rather let Travis take the reins to explain a little bit more of the details before we get started with our meeting. Travis, I'll turn the floor over to you.

>> Travis Dougherty: Sorry, we didn't get quite connected. I'm still adding us into Facebook and we'll be able to get started. We are now live. We are now live. Okay. We're now live on Facebook right now. I would like to let everybody know that this meeting is for board members and presenters here on Zoom, and the public is able to view this through Facebook live and make comments there on Facebook as well. And I will be monitoring the Facebook page and moderating the questions, comments, and concerns that are expressed through Facebook. And bringing them live into the meeting today. So I just wanted to be clear about that part. I'd like to turn the time back over to Al.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Let me just make sure I'm up. Is it my turn now? All right. Fantastic. Good morning, everyone. The time is 9:05. It's unusual to be having a meeting via Zoom, to do things virtually like this. I do certainly hope that everyone can see each other, and many thanks to Travis for setting this up. As per our regular board meetings, we'll start off with roll call to make sure that we have all our members present. So... we don't have an updated list, I think, or do we, actually, that's a good question. Is somebody taking care of roll call and documenting attendance? I'll put that out as a question. Typically Kevin took care of that for us. Kevin, have you handled roll call? Since you've done that in the past? Okay, Jason is going to make a comment?

>> Jason Corning: Yeah, I would suggest that every person just temporarily bring up their video, say their name. That way everyone who is viewing can see the members of the board and you can simply count who is here. We don't have to do a named list, but maybe mention a person's name, add them, bring their video up, and do it that way.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. I agree with Jason on that point. But I don't have a list of all the current names with me. I understand we've had some resignations, some people whose terms have expired. Travis, I don't know if you have an updated attendance list. Travis? Or Travis, can you bring up people's video one at a time?

Yes, Travis, can you bring up each individual and do roll call that way? Go down the list and see who is present? And if we can't -- oh, there we go.

>> Travis Dougherty: Hi, so I do have a list here. I had to really quickly grab it. So I do have a list. I will say a name, and if you're here, please open your video so that we can see that you're actually here in attendance. That would be great. First, Betty Dodds. Or you can type in the chat just saying "I'm here" if you'd like. Or you can do it with your voice if you'd like to unmute. Seems Betty is not here. Next, Allysa Dittmar. Next would be Alex Simmons -- oh, I just saw Alex, he popped up and went away. So we know Alex is here. I'll check him off. Darrin Smith. Oh, Betty also just got in the meeting and Darrin as well. Hey, Darrin, welcome to the meeting. Oh, great. Betty and Darrin are both here now! Hey, Darrin. If you wouldn't mind turning off your video feed now, that would be great, please. And Betty. You guys need to have gallery view turned on. So click gallery view from the top right so you can see everyone. We have a presenter view specifically for Jason to be able to view the CDI. But then Betty if you could turn off your video that would be great. Is Ken with you, Betty? Let me just make sure, if I force people to turn themselves off, they can't turn it back on until I give them permission. So I'd rather not enforce a video being turned off. Thanks. Next is Ken Putkovich. Is he here? Oh, he's joining the meeting right now, actually. He's coming in. Everybody is coming in as soon as I call their name! Great. Okay. Lori told me she would be late, coming into the meeting later. Jason is here. Shannon Minnick. Shannon? Were you here? No Shannon. Okay. Next, Deirdre Lynch.

>> Deirdre Lynch: Yes, I'm present.

>> Travis Dougherty: Great, yes, I got you. Last on my list is Al. And Al is here! You're last on the list. So that is our roll call. The only people who are not here are Alison, Shannon is not here, and one that's late. So it looks like we have a quorum, correct?

>> I'm curious, who is joining us via phone? I see a phone number there. The last digits are 5954... so who is joining us via phone? It's down at the bottom of my screen. Oh, it's Tarita.

>> Travis Dougherty: Yeah, that's the phone number there, so our outreach coordinator, Tarita, is on the phone. Thanks, Al. I'm going to turn it back over to you. We're done with roll call

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. I thought we'd get started with John Brennan. Okay. I'm just getting myself organized. If we can get started with the meeting, he'll be coming on very soon. So we want to start off with approval of the minutes from January 16th. Any objections? Seeing none... if there is an objection -- oh, we've got in the chat box, I see some chats coming in. Darrin makes a motion to approve the minutes from the January meeting. We need a second. Okay. Jason seconds. Who is taking notes? Who's taking minutes for today's meeting? Point of clarification?

>> Travis Dougherty: I will be doing that.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Fantastic. Okay. As I'm sure everybody is aware, TAM has moved from the auspices of the Department of Information Technology to the Department of Disabilities as their oversight state agency. John Brennan has also taken over responsibilities for that as Deputy Secretary. However, the director of TAM is still David Bahar. And he is going to actually say a few words. So actually I think John, you can go ahead and get started.

>> John Brennan: Thank you, Al. Good morning, everyone. I appreciate the opportunity to take a little bit of time on the agenda just to talk about the transition that's happened. First off, I hope everyone has been able to stay healthy and safe during the pandemic. I think this is the first time that the board has gotten together since March. So this is kind of the new world that we're in, where we have these meetings via Zoom. So I just wanted to say a few words, because the legislation, the transfer of TAM from DoIT over to MDOD, did pass, and is effective. We are in the process of transitioning the program over to DOD. I do have responsibility for working with David and the team at TAM to help support the vision as well as the contracts they have to maintain and get through and some staffing vacancies that we have to fill. I won't go into too much detail because I know David will be providing updates on the transfer. But I wanted to take the time to reiterate the department of disability's commitment to the program. One thing in the transition we've done is carved out a sort of separate space in our budget architecture for the TAM program, which I think is significant because it sets apart TAM from the rest of the MDOD organization. It means they will have sort of a separate budget page during our fiscal hearings. It also creates sort of a unique identifier for TAM funds and how those are being used so that there's full transparency there, and allows us to protect the funds so that they aren't used for other purposes. So I know that through the process there was not 100% consensus on where TAM should end up. So I just wanted to make sure that I followed through in our commitment about being open and transparent and giving people an opportunity to express some concerns or ask questions. Again, we're here to support the director of the TAM program, and I think so far it's been going pretty smoothly. But I'll let David speak to that. So we're happy to be in a position to help support the sustainability of the program. And I think that it's going to be a good relationship. So I'll open it up to any questions anybody might have, or otherwise we can proceed with the rest of the agenda.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: All right. This is Al speaking. I do have a question, John, if you can see me, if you're ready, and we are, yes.

>> John Brennan: Yes, I can see you.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: It's lovely to see your face once again, John. It's been a long, long time. And the Deaf community, as you well know -- just monitoring the chat for a moment, and the captions I have running are so very small. The text in the chat is so very small for me too. So, in the Deaf community, we have some lingering concerns about this transition period. There were conditions set forth that would have been agreed to, and those conditions would have been things like budgetary limitations on TAM, related issues, and on down the line. I just wanted to make good and sure, John, that we're adhering to those agreed upon conditions. Also I wanted to mention the budget. I have some personal concerns, and I understand that Maryland, like many other states, indeed, due to the COVID virus, have been experiencing some funding crises. And in Maryland, we're trying to catch as catch can, trying to figure out where to get money from and to, and I just wanted to make sure that TAM is well and goodly protected. That any of those limitations will result in two-way communication with the Department of Disabilities. I wonder if it would be possible, for example, if the school budgets were lessened, if there would be budgetary tradeoffs between TAM and school budgets, I don't know. If -- related to people with disabilities. I just wanted to clarify that it certainly, the money is not going to go to a program. And if it does indeed get funneled off to another program, that we have clear bilateral communication with one another during that process as to the funding. I'll turn it to you, John.

>> John Brennan: Sure. You're right. The budget climate right now is pretty severe. I think the one thing that protects the TAM budget is the fact that the funding comes specifically from the USTF fund. It's what is known within the budget world as a special fund. And so as far as individual budget cuts go, I don't think the TAM program specifically is going to be impacted by that. Because those funds have to be used for a specific purpose. I think to your larger point, which is, you know, what if either -- I don't know if you're referring to MDOD or maybe agencies external to MDOD, because they're experiencing budget cuts, would they try to take those funds and use them for other purposes? I have not heard any discussions or hints that that is happening or people are thinking about that in light of the current fiscal environment. As far as within MDOD, yeah, I'm committed to full transparency and, you know, the budget is being driven by the director and his collaboration with GABTR. And he'll communicate those priorities to us, and then we'll support those in the process of submitting our budget for FY22. Again, in the spirit of transparency, that was one of the reasons why I pushed to make sure that our budget architecture was changed from its current format to create additional programs that could be tracked separately from MDOD's general funds. We've never been organized like that before. But this sort of creates that opportunity for us. So all of the TAM funds, it's not like they'll be blended into MDOD's budget and you won't be able to tell the difference between the use of those funds, separate from all of our other sources of funds. It will clearly show what the TAM budget is and what it will be used for. Like I said, I'm not aware of any external efforts to try to use TAM funds at this time. If they came up, then I would discuss that with David, and I'm sure that he would bring in the GABTR board. I hope that answers your question.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: It does indeed, John. Thank you for that point of clarification. I just wanted to make sure. I don't mean to look for trouble! But I just wanted to make sure that we are well protected. Especially given the crisis in front of us. Thank you, John.

>> John Brennan: You're welcome.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Is there anyone else who would like to ask John some questions? Do raise your hand, or indicate as such in the chat. If you would like to say something, indicate as such in the chat, and I will monitor that and Travis can spotlight you. If you would like to say something, we can name you in the chat and then Travis will spotlight you. Seeing no further questions at the moment, going once, going twice, going three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten times! We're closing that Q and A for John. John, if you had anything you wanted to add...

>> John Brennan: No, that was it. I just wanted to again, you know, just let everyone know how excited we are for this transfer --

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Do you plan to stay with us through the balance of the meeting?

>> John Brennan: Yes, I'll be here.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Excellent. Thank you, John, very much, for that information. It's very good to know. Now, moving along on our agenda, we're ready for the staff report. And I will give the floor to David Bahar. I can't really say give you the floor. I'll give you the screen! I'll give David the screen. Fair enough?

>> David Bahar: Hello, everyone. This is David. David Bahar. I'm the director of Telecommunications Access Maryland, and I'm very thrilled to be meeting with everyone here today to give you some updates, some exciting things that have been afoot in our work. As John made mention, when we met not as much in March, but in January, for the first half of the year we've really been underway with no meetings, which has been a source of disappointment. But we have a schedule set, and the April session was cancelled due to the pandemic. And we tried to figure out how to kind of get our bearings and catch up with our meeting schedule. Travis Dougherty came on board as the director of Relay, and we collaborated in trying to kind of figure out how to make it all work out.

>> Jason Corning: (Applause).

>> David Bahar: So we're very grateful that Travis is here and working things out. In the context of my report, in past meetings, I will admit I've been long-winded, so I'll try to reel it in this time. As we have mentioned, time and time again, I will reiterate, telecommunications relay services are a living, breathing entity that can't really just be stagnant. Of course there are challenges that are necessary to work through, the way to distribute information via technology, the ease of use, the flexibility for any number of stakeholder groups of people with disabilities, etc. And we just need to make sure of a couple things in that context. For Relay and for accessible telecommunication. It's something we need to make sure the citizen of Maryland have. Now, for the Relay, those services include TRS, CTS, and of course the two new features that I'm going to talk a little bit more about, RCC and RTT. From our perspective, Relay services can be brought to a larger cross-section of the population and benefit more people. And it certainly can benefit everyone. Everyone will avail themselves of these kinds of services where they are needed. Similarly so, with the equipment distribution programs, if people struggle to use traditional telephones and they can use adaptive or assistive equipment, they might not be aware the program is available. Also the loaner program and TAP, they might not know that is available. So we need to get the word out among the community so that they can use both services and equipment. Since our meeting in January, we have had two large things afoot. With our contracts, certainly the Relay contract has been inked as of March 1st. So the TTY and the CTS captioned telephone services were in that. We've added RCC for re mote conferences that we're going to be talking more about a little bit later. We're very excited about that. And RTT, or real-time text, which is a brand new feature. Maryland is really the first state to have adopted that. Obviously there are growing pains and ongoing frustrations as we navigate that process. But certainly now we're up and running, and smoothly as can be expected. We can give you some updates about RTT. In terms of getting the word out for people to use it, enable it, and in the context of a this year this is certainly important for that effort.

Moving on to staff announcements. Asia Johnson was the outreach point person. They left TAM in 2020, January of 2020, and certainly we knew that by the time of our board meeting in January we'd have a recruitment effort underway. So we have a new TAM outreach manager, and a MAT specialist for that program. So we've got Travis Dougherty in the position of Relay director. We've seen him already. He's going to be giving his report very shortly and talking about what he's been doing with his staff. And the TAM outreach position was filled by Donna Broadway-Callaman. So we're going to have a report about what they've been up to and the two new staff that have come onboard. Certainly tons of things afoot, lots of work, good working done there. Unfortunately, the MAT specialist position is one that we have had open in active recruiting and interviewing and offering, but the candidate to whom we had offered it declined the position, after which the state government announced that all open positions would be frozen. Even if the interview process and the offer and declination process was already underway. We couldn't go to a backup person at that stage. So we're going to have to hold on for that. But with the support of John Brennan and certainly with the MDOD team, we've been able to unfreeze and proceed with the process of hiring. And I remain hopeful.

The last two positions, we'll say, it hasn't really been part of our team historically, certainly for the last two years. But I wanted to emphasize that folks will be filling the positions of, number 1, TAM finance. This is a person who processes invoices, looks at spenddown of the budget, handles requests, purchase orders, etc. So that's one position in the past we've had such a position. PIN, the staff position under TAM would have been, gosh, to 2018 would have been the end of that. But after that, that position was removed from TAM, and DoIT hired out and filled that position and we were sort of left bereft and having to depend on them for all of our financial functions. And once we were over to Maryland Department of Disabilities, we were able to regain that function, so PIN is back in TAM. But the same holds true for the freeze, unfortunately. We have been unable to work that at the moment. Finally, the administrative assistant is the second position. This is not one of our PINs. There are only six of those. This admin assistant is a contractor. The individual's name is Maury Montaro, and that will be from July to July, 19 to 20. So we had a stop-work under that contract after June 30th, and we're now looking for a new contractor to work with for admin duties. Jason, I saw that you did have your hand up. If you're happy to wait until the end of my report, then I can take your question.

>> Jason Corning: Absolutely.

>> David Bahar: Excellent. Thank you, Jason. So, moving along to transition updates. As John Brennan just shared, some of our transition activities, I wanted to emphasize that certainly the law on 7/1, on 1 July, detailed that transition process in terms of budgetary stuff, accounting matters, has yet to be completed with the Department of Disabilities, and DBM is still managing our finances in the context of that transition, as we go from DoIT to MDOD. So it's not like a just plug and play scenario. But we're kind of working it out bit by bit. And as we have seen, by the end of July or, I want to say, maybe early August is when we can kind of get our transition fully operationalized. And once that happens, we're off to the races with FY21 budget matters. For now we're going to have to hold off, be in a holding posture as the budget amendment for DBM goes through, and as the transition works its way out, you've got physical and electronic e-mail addresses, little admin management things going on, staff access to this, that, and the other. So a lot of these little minutiae will be pending until we're officially and finally under maybe August 2020 is when we'll have a clean break, hopefully. As this transition happens, certainly this is 12 years in the coming, so there's a lot of people involved and it's not just TAM, it's MDOD, it's DBM, it's a whole lot of players that have a learning curve to go through. In the TAM transition bill, which was passed by law, you'll remember that there are conditions to that that Sonny made mention of. That condition would be that the director and leadership team -- has to be on the leadership team for MDOD in an advisory position for policy matters to the Secretary. So that has certainly been happening. I want to say, wow, since September 2019, we've been actively involved with the MDOD team, honestly for, gosh, nine months now. And that has been a really wonderful collaboratory experience. They celebrated our arrival. TAM changed our branding to comport with that. We've had outreach in the community, and certainly we've been thrilled with our reception at MDOD and the team there. So we look forward to a further collaborative relationship. And there are items within that bill, including new board members to GABTR. And we have been able to identify and nominate and select folks to add to the board. The Maryland Advisory Council for Deaf and Hard of Hearing being one. Also we've got DeafBlind communication facilitate or program, who are now officially statutorily included under the Maryland State code. That's a priority of 2020. I apologize, 2021. That we work on expanding and developing that program.

>> Jason Corning: Thank you for that, David.

>> David Bahar: So we're excited to pursue that.

Moving along to the financial updates. Now, our finances do not look a whole lot different than they have historically. In the last column for FY18, you'll see an error. It should read FY20. And there has been, what, July through the end of May. Unfortunately we don't have any information for June 2020. But you'll see the historical and the forecast. That last month is not going to be included in the historical, obviously. But the forecast tip will be under the starting budget for the year. That budget ending balance is 14,200,000. That does not reflect invoices that we've just received from the Maryland Department on Aging. That's 302,000. For the senior call check program.

The ultimate balance will reflect that, so it will look a little bit different from the documents you have before you. So the forecast is maybe upwards of 100K less. We just began on 1 July, 2019. So I will entertain questions at this time with respect to the items that I have introduced. Donna is going to talk a whole heck of a lot and Travis is going to talk a whole heck of a lot about their respective programs, Relay and outreach, or maybe MAT. You can certainly pose questions to them for those. But I am finished with my report. That concludes my remarks and I'm open to your questions at this time.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Jason, did you have a question?

>> Jason Corning: No, I will ask my question later. I want to make sure we stay on time in our meeting.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Well, I have a question. Regarding the senior call check program, it's my understanding that we had agreed, I believed there would be 150,000 dollars allocated to that. Now you've given the number of $300,000. I thought it was supposed to have a pilot study attached to that. Have we proceeded to that? Could you clarify the current status of where we are with the senior call check program, David?

>> David Bahar: Absolutely. In the statute, it indicates that the charges for the senior call check program would be covered by the USTF and TAM would run the program. In the statute it makes no mention, however, of any cap of how much can be charged. In the past -- let's see -- this was stood up, I want to say, at 120K for the first year? Maybe 250 for the second. And now we have seen incremental increases, staff costs mostly is the source of that. So we're in the process of now working with DoIT fiscal folks to identify what is and what is not statutorily permitted in the process, and every penny of those charges for the senior call check program will be ascribed to, for example, charges that are maybe not including staff or PIN, staffing. We'll be working our way through those processes. But as you read the statute, it doesn't really impose a cap in any way. Which means that outlines what you can and can't charge for. So we've seen incremental increases for the senior call check program. It is growing. Mind you, the statute does indicate that the program cannot exceed $0.05 per account, as it is written now for staffing purposes, and the communication account in Maryland is capped at $0.05. So as the funding comes in from USTF, in theory, this means that we can charge our entire annual income from USDF. So that certainly is not what's intended. But that leaves it quite open ended, unfortunately. But we're certainly looking into the long-term, in my humble opinion.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Can you see me?

>> Yes, we can see you, Sonny.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: So this is $0.05 per minute for the senior call check and the TAM related issues altogether?

>> David Bahar: It is indeed.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I do agree that the pilot study would have not been permanent funding, but the law was certainly passed that would have taken on a more permanent character for that.

>> John Brennan: Absolutely --

>> David Bahar: Absolutely. And the permanent part of COMAR was set into law, and it didn't have an expiration date. It was open-ended. But I'm very happy to send among the board members that language for your review or for your consultation. You can see that it is a separate discussion from the other program. Anyway, we just have to bear this in mind, and we have done so in these last few meetings and now for some years.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: So up until this point, the senior call check has been funded by our program, I believe, and I believe the person that was responsible for that program would now be under the Department of Aging. So they should be part of our program, and maybe we should consider having them report to you as well. Maybe establishing some kind of protocol or procedure for the person who is responsible for oversight of the senior call check program being under your supervision to a certain degree.

>> David Bahar: I think that would be outstanding. Unfortunately, it would require a change to the law. It would require the process of introducing a bill. And we would have to come to a level of consensus on that language of the law. However, we do recognize the irony of a program being funded by USTF money which was indeed set up, Telecommunications Access, to pay for a program that is inaccessible to Relay users. So that irony is not lost on me. And we remain very sensitive to that. Among our team, certainly we were -- are working with Arnold Eppel of MDA to make sure the call centers run adequate Seth -- test tests, and we can make more mention of that in the context of the report. But there's a whole lot of work done now to make sure these processes of accessible to people who are Deaf, hard of hearing, and have other difficulties in using traditional telecommunications. And this is inviting some questions on whether or not these programs are going to be taking over our funding ultimately. If they do expand to a level that that is a risk. So Arnold Eppel is going to talk a little -- he talked about it at our last in person meeting in January, it would be, what, 250 people who have signed up for that particular program, and we just need to make sure that is adequate, that that is working. And if there are Deaf folks like you Al who want to test that, you're more than welcome to do so. So if the number grows, then we can see that happen. But host most definitely we have to keep a close eye on it

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I don't think it's necessarily fair for Arnold to have two bosses, so to speak. You understand what I mean? I think it needs to be clarified. Right now it seems to be very convoluted for him particularly, for Arnold, since he's working for this program and really has two, quote-unquote, supervisors. We do need to look into solving that as soon as possible.

>> David Bahar: TAM is not really in a supervisory position with Arnold. There's really no ability or no constraint on him whatsoever. It's just the secretary Cramer would be the person who whom he's reporting

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Yes, but the funding is coming from you. I mean, that issue is still there. We have to work to resolve that issue.

>> David Bahar: Indeed, that is critical for us as well.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Another question to the transfer to MDOD and the conditions that go along with that. You mentioned the details of the transfer were still in the works. I'm curious, what is the impact on expenses and your budget? Is there any impact? Has it slowed you down at all, this transfer?

>> David Bahar: No. It just means that we have a little bit of a gap. Between our spending with DoIT and when we can start with MDOD. However, if we have a critical purchase that needs to be made, we can process that through DoIT. And they'll take care of it. They'll reimburse later or something in that regard. So we're not going to lose our ability to operate. It just means that we're going to need to make some decisions on what we need to cover now that can't wait for a few weeks. But overall, we're moving as usual. It's business as usual.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I know TAM historically had a difficult time getting permission from DoIT to make purchases. What's the current status? Has that process gotten better?

>> David Bahar: We don't have possession of the van that you're talking about yet. But it has been ordered. And my understanding is that the van has been shipped. It's on the train, I think, now, to BWI as of yesterday, and so it should be arriving at the dealership for us to pick up within the next week or two. I haven't gotten complete clarification on that. But, yes, it has been purchased, and we will be taking possession shortly.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Excellent. Travis is mentioning that we have a question from the audience. If Travis could come up...

>> Travis Dougherty: Yes, I do. Okay. A question from Heidi Burghardt. She says good morning. The BFRA bylaws are impacted by TAM's budget. And how will TAM and MDOD ensure that they don't sweep funds from TAM just into the general state budget?

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: BFRA, could you clarify that?

>> Travis Dougherty: That's what she typed, BFRA. I'm not sure what that means. I can get back to her. David, do you know what she's talking about there?

>> David Bahar: Jason, did you have a question?

>> Jason Corning: If we could just reemphasize rules of order to make sure that, I thought we were going to hold questions to the end of the meeting. At this point it's just the board who is conducting business. We don't -- we want to be cognizant of time. So once we proceed through our natural course of business, then we can have questions at the end.

>> David Bahar: Jason, I apologize for that. I'll let Travis handle the logistics of that. But this question from Heidi about BFRA's budget reduction, right now the State of Maryland is going through, I believe -- I've forgotten the exact number, but maybe John could fill us in if he remembers, but the governor has asked all state agencies to reduce their spending, I believe it was by 10%. That's not a number I'm 100% sure on, however, because TAM uses special funding for operations, special funds are USTF equivalent. We are not asked to provide, actually, any reductions in our budget. Our budget will remain the same and will not be affected by the budget reductions. If anything, it means that we have actually a harder time filling our staff positions, because the budget reductions are reduced to the PIN freezes. So any vacancies in the PINs are frozen until a declaration is made of unfreezing those, and then they can open up for applications, and we've got to prove why we need to unfreeze something. And we're getting a lot of nos when we ask those questions. So we're going through USTF funds, not getting budget reductions, and that gives them more flexibility with unfreezing our positions, but the USTF, according to Maryland law, has some specific provisions for what we can use the money on. In general, budgets are not allowed to take money from USTF. That's according to Maryland law. The law is very clear, however, that USTF money can only be used for the programs listed under 3A. So, substantial, five, six, and seven. So for Maryland Relay, six is MAT programs, seven is the senior call check, -- sorry, let me clarify. MAT program and NFB News Line. So those three are what the limitation is placed on us for using USTF funds. So they can take budget from other areas, or they can try to, but it would be illegal. So hopefully that answers your question.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. I think we're ready for our next presenter. Let me double check the agenda quickly. Travis.

>> Travis Dougherty: Fantastic. Hello, everyone. Making adjustments to my screen real quickly. Okay. I think I'm ready to proceed with my report, if you're ready, Al. Fantastic. Thank you. Let me introduce myself to everyone. My name is Travis Dougherty. I'm the new Relay manager for the State of Maryland and I'm really thrilled to be here. In addition to that, I'm the liaison for GABTR coordinating this meeting as well as working with GABTR. So for the public, if you have any questions, please go ahead and add them to the comment field in Facebook and we'll be curating them moving forward and addressing them later on in the meeting. Let's go ahead and get started.

So, I joined in April, and in the last three months, I feel like it's already been a year for me, to be completely honest. There's been a lot of things on my plate, we've been making forward momentum with different projects. Of course I started at the same time the pandemic was under way. That was an interesting experience. I feel like I've been running in place in my house, running around the house, trying to get a lot of things completed, a lot of projects, a lot of exciting things on board when it comes to TAM, a lot of exciting things happening in the community as well, which has been very exciting, that I've been involved in. So it's a really great time for us, as well as a bit of an odd time. But I digress. So, as David mentioned, our new contract began the first of March. That brought online two new services for TAM. One is RCC, remote conference captioning. The other is real-time text. And we'll expound upon both later on. When it specifically comes to RCC, again, very exciting time for us as an organization, because we have a caption service now for online meetings, which is perfect timing when you think about the pandemic and everybody working remotely from home, and so many meetings happening virtually. We want to make sure they're accessible for everybody, like they are here, you can see this taking place in real time. This is a free offering from the State of Maryland for anybody within the State of Maryland. And it has been a learning process. And we have noticed that we as a state are really pioneering the rules for this program. We're writing them in real time. RCC is more hands off with the process. We are the rule making body for that. And we are deciding this. So what we are is going to set up forum groups. We're not going to set this up in a silo or vacuum. We're setting up groups with diverse constituents, Deaf, DeafBlind, a variety of educational backgrounds, working in the government and private sector, and collecting information from them. We'll talk about the uses of RCC, their experiences with RCC, we're going to use their feedback and data to help develop some protocols and standard operating procedures. We're also going to look at what other states have done in terms of how they've used RCC. How they protect and incorporate it within what they're doing on a day to day basis. What their successes have been, their challenges have been. We're going to take all this data, share with the focus groups, and have discussions. This is a process that's still ongoing. At this point we've agreed that RCC will be used for online meetings at this point. That means conference call. Any conference call you need to call in, that will be RCC. Anything that requires a phone number. Could you hold your question till the end of the report, Jason? Do you mind?

>> Jason Corning: Sure, no problem.

>> Travis Dougherty: Fantastic, I appreciate that. We've also identified some growing pains with RCC, with the service itself, several things that need to be addressed. For example, let me give you a little bit of background. We've been working with Hamilton to modify the existing contract language with RCC, how we can improve that, for example, adding that the RCC captionist must show up five minutes before the appointed time, not one minute before the appointed time. That doesn't give them enough time to work out the logistics. So that five minute requirement on the front end. Also some software programming requirements need to be edited, some basic language of the contract. Some changes to that require changes to the software. The goal of course is to provide a better RCC service. For example, a downloadable transcript. Right now we're still having some issues with that. We're working on solving those issues so that after an RCC call is finished the client has the ability to download a raw unedited version of the transcript of whatever transpired during that meeting, the meeting notes so to speak. We're moving forward with that process. We're also developing a flyer of instructions for how to use RCC, how to request it, how to navigate the process, that is in the works. And that is really exciting, because we're going to be using this in the near future, and I think it's going to be very popular because of the pandemic. So we're continuing to find accommodation services for the Deaf, hard of hearing, and the DeafBlind community, figuring out how to meet their needs, how to make sure they're getting the information they need, and to make sure they remain connected in our changing global societal situation. So this comes online at the perfect time. Next is RTT, real-time text, that we're adding to the existing contract. We have a lot of work done and that still needs to be done in this context. To really encapsulate what that is, it's live TTY for lack of better word. If you wanted to send a picture or send a video, you can type back and forth and you will see character by character as the person is typing, simultaneously. During the RTT experience. It's more instant, immediate communication. Much faster than TTY. Of course you know with TTY etiquette, it's very much a turn taking experience, and you have to say GA or go ahead or SK for stop keying, and certain codes to dictate that the conversation is over like SKSK. This has been very hard wired into our system, our process. RTT is changing that history. We're not using etiquette like go ahead and SK anymore. That's going to be very much real time and text style in terms of the communication, and you'll see the person typing in real time live, character by character. This is already popular in Europe. It's just now reaching the States, and Maryland is the first state to offer this service. The very first. There are several other states that are soon going to be coming online with it as well, to let you know. Now, we are gung-ho to use this, but unfortunately we still have two barriers to overcome. First, we know 711 and we are all familiar with 911. For 711, if you're using RTT and making a call to 711, you still have to go through a TTY gateway. It's like a back channel door to come in. It's converted to a TTY call. It doesn't go through as a true RTT call. So you still have to use that TTY etiquette of GA or SK, and that's not the full RTT experience. That is not direct to 711 communication. You're still having to be rerouted. Our vendor, Hamilton, is ready to have direct RTT communication. It's ready to go. The issue is that the State of Maryland is not ready. Also on a national level they're still a little bit behind. So we're working with all of the various carriers, for example Verizon, ATT, T mobile, and the like. So we're working to be able to transfer the RTT calls directly to 711 without the TTY conversion. We want direct, immediate access. Now imagine being able to send a picture to your interpreter, to your operator, if you're not understanding a specific word, being able to send a picture of that in real time to make the interpretation that much clearer. It's got so many advantages and benefits. But we need that direct straight access without going through a gateway to 711. And we're thinking that could be a six month to one year process before we get that finally worked out.

The second barrier is our challenges with 911. This has been an interesting experience. We're working with the public safety access points, PSAPs, which is basically your 911 call center or emergency center or your highway pat role. They have certain centers, you know, if your car breaks down. So basically all of those centers throughout the State of Maryland. We know we have approximately 80% of the PSAPs throughout the State of Maryland running on the NG911, or next generation 911. In the past we were under the E911, emergency 911, process. That doesn't accommodate for RTT. However, NG 911 can accommodate receiving RTT calls. They go directly to the operator in those cases. There's no gateway, no passthrough with 711. It goes directly to that emergency operator. It doesn't have to go through an interpreter to 911, because our goal is to have direct access. You want to be able to even send a picture, for example, if you have a flat tire so the 911 operator has a better understanding of what's happening. So you can see the potential benefits. The problem we're experiencing is if you call 911 through RTT, it automatically reroutes Through 711 before reaching the operator. That's an additional complexity. If you call 711, the 911 operator is not able to locate you. If you call directly, they can pinpoint your location and provide better service. That means if it goes Through 711, you could be rerouted to the wrong PSAP, the wrong call center. If I call from Baltimore, I could be connected to a PSAP in Annapolis, which is going to delay the response to the emergency. A direct call would get you connected to the closest PSAP to your location, and they could process the call from there. These are things we continue to work on. My understanding is that, again, 80% of the PSAPs are using next gen911. That process is already in place. So they should be compatible with RTT. However, it requires ECC, the emergency -- I'm trying to remember the acronym -- the emergency centers and Maryland emergency management agency need to officially approve or, quote-unquote, turn on direct RTT to the 911 call centers, to the PSAPs. That needs to be turned on. Right now the concern and the problem that the PSAPs have is that those 20% that are still on the E911 platform, we don't know how to mitigate those. 100% of the PSAPs need to be using NG 911. Then we can go live with RTT so they can contact 911 directly. TAM disagrees. We feel they should be turned on even at 80%, because those 20% are located in extremely rural areas of the state. What's going to happen is if a person calls through RTT to a 911 call center, they'll get a message saying you're unable to make that call, please call 711 first and it will redirect Through 911. Again, we're pushing for turning on RTT direct access, because the majority of those PSAPs already have the 911 platform on next generation, and are ready to go.

So that's something that we're working on with Hamilton, with MDOD, with Gallaudet TAC, all these different entities to try to improve this. Because we want to improve the services for the State of Maryland

Some of the other states are looking to us as a model for how to roll things out moving forward, and we are really building this plane as it's flying. We want to make sure that the service is acceptable. We have to come up with all of this from scratch, and we'll be more than happy to share with the other states as they bring their RTT rollout on board so it's also as successful as possible. It's been a very interesting process.

Okay. Let's see where I am in my notes. Okay. Next, another part of my work is related to outreach and marketing and navigating those spaces. David mentioned some vacancies. I know that Donna, our outreach manager, will be talking in length about some exciting things going on with us. We just finished our logo design for TAM, our MAT program, and Maryland Relay. I'm sure the board has seen on the reports what it looks like. We don't have a color printer, I apologize, so this is the black and white version. And we're using all the colors from the Maryland flag. We're really happy with the logo. It isn't finished. I'll let Donna talk more about that. But that's been a big part of what our focus has been as of recently. On the 30th of June, David and myself gave a presentation to Deaf in Government, DIG, their weekly webinar, basically doing an overview of TAM, talking about the future of Maryland Relay, and nationwide what relay services would look like. We had very good participation, about 60 people in the audience. A lot of questions. A lot of people reached out to us afterwards. We had some people using the service and some people interested in using RCC. We actually used it for the purposes of that meeting. So that was really great to see people coming on board with that. We're going to do some video production in the near future, specifically talking about what Relay is, introducing TAM as an entity, we're going to have this professionally done and it will be rolling out very soon. Our goal is to really develop some updated morning videos highlighting and show casing our services, educating people about what relay is. They're going to be used for outreach, for marketing, for training purposes. They're going to be very versatile and we're looking forward to that. That's our next project that we have coming down the pipeline. In addition to that, the Maryland Association of the Deaf, MDAD, their symposium, which I believe is July 25th, upcoming Saturday, there's going to be all day workshops and TAM will be going to that as well and giving a presentation. We've also noticed that we haven't really given the due diligence and paid enough attention to our Spanish speaking community and highlighting those services. We have amazing services for our Spanish speaking community. We have Spanish to English as well as Spanish to Spanish relay services for all of our different services. TTY, VCO, HCO, we offer all of those in both languages. We haven't really capitalized on that. We have a huge Latino, Latina community. And moving forward, we're planning on expanding outreach efforts to that community specifically, and making sure that we grow that customer base. So it's a very, very exciting dynamic time for us. And that pretty much wraps up my report. I'm open to any questions anyone might have. Jason, you had your hand up

>> Jason Corning: I did. I'd like to know about RCC use for meetings. Is it being used for this meeting?

>> Travis Dougherty: We're using CART, yes, we've actually contracted CART for this meeting.

>> Jason Corning: Gotcha.

>> Travis Dougherty: And I want to let David clarify a few things if I could. I'll ask David to come on screen, if you wouldn't mind coming on screen.

>> David Bahar: Sure thing. Hi there. Just real quick, one thing about real-time text and how it works. RTT, like Travis mentioned, is texting in real time. However, NG 911, though it supports that technology, if you happen to call 911 center, it is not supporting RTT yet. So it will go through a TTY conversion at this point. I just want to remind you that if you get through and you see garbled language and that it's a turn-taking experience using GA and SK, that's what's happening there. That's not the experience we're looking for. We believe that is, to put it nicely, a mistake. That's not what is supposed to happen. In an emergency situation when people are feeling stressed and they need communication quickly, having to worry about text being garbled and a turn-taking experience is traumatic for anyone. So that's why it is so critical, we feel, to get out there to the Maryland PSAPs and convince them who have NG 911 capabilities to convert. So we don't have those experiences taking place. Comparatively speaking, people experiencing texting to 911, if you text to 911, what happens at 911 is they don't support text, and it just bounces back right now. So a message will say "this PSAP does not support text. Please call". That's the message you get back. But that's not what happens for real-time texting. If you real-time text to 911, it doesn't say they don't support it. The user will just experience a frustrating experience of garbled text and turn-taking. The FCC rules on this are much less clear for the PSAP's responsibility in supporting real-time texting. Because of that, the FCC can't mandate PSAPs to support it currently. So text to 911 is not mandated as part of these other technologies. FCC does regulate certain things like the internet connection for the PSAP. And the pipeline that's coming in to their building and what size of that pipeline. They do say the broadband or the carriers, you know, ATT, Verizon, and them, they must be able to locate wireless calls within a certain radius. They can mandate that. But what happens inside the building, the 911 call center, that is under the Department of Justice, and their responsibility. And the Department of Justice will not require them to support text to 911 or real time text as we call it, RTT.

So we're talking with the State of Maryland, so that the State of Maryland can push these 20% of PSAPs to get caught up with modern technology.

And I just wanted to clarify that. So thank you for the time

>> Travis Dougherty: No problem. This is something I'm still learning as we go too. Any additional questions?

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. We do have another question about calling using real time text. It looks like a TTY at this point? Or is it an app you have to use? How do you do it? Because people are confused between TTY calls or a phone text call and that. So can you clarify that?

>> Travis Dougherty: Absolutely, thank you. So as we all know, the traditional TTY machine that everyone is aware of. RTT operates a little bit differently. It really depends on the type of phone. But the majority of phones already have this within their operating system. If you go into settings, if you go into accessibility, it brings up a list, and RTT is typically listed there and you just turn it on. So it's built into most operating systems. Most of the phones include that. We do have a land line RTT phone machine. That's what other states are doing a pilot program with that currently, testing that out. It's a land line version of RTT, which is very interesting. It's still very, very new. Most people are accessing RTT via their smartphone, because it's a basic iOS or Android OSs have that. Kevin, did you want to add something?

>> Kevin Steffy: If I can add, with real time text, MAT will be posting focus groups in September with an RTT pilot program. So we'll be releasing more, and I'll be talking more about this in my report. I just wanted to put that out there

>> Travis Dougherty: Thank you.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: So you mentioned RCC as well, remote captioning, which is outstanding. That happens through telephony only, or can it also be web based? Because there are many podcasts and webinars that are conducted only online. So I'm wondering if RCC can integrate with the web.

>> Travis Dougherty: Yes, if there's a phone number to call in so you can hear the audio. That's the only requirement. Any meeting, any video that has an associated phone number that you would call in to access the audio. Because that's how it recognizes the relay service, is via that phone number. If you can call into that meeting or that web cast, or that podcast or webinar, then you can access it

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: So it has to have a phone number. Okay. Fair enough. Are there any other questions from other members of the board for Travis at this time?

>> Jason Corning: I'll count to 10. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10. All right. No further questions. Let's have our interpreters switch at this time.

>> Travis Dougherty: Well, that concludes my report.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: We'll move over to Kevin now.

>> Travis Dougherty: One last comment I just wanted to add real quickly, sorry. Just one last comment real quickly. Hamilton informed me that as long as the captioner has access to high-quality audio, RCC will work. Just wanted to make sure that was on the record. Okay. Thank you so much.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay, thank you so much. Kevin, the floor is yours.

>> Kevin Steffy: Hello, board, and the public. My name is Kevin Steffy, the MAT, Maryland Access Technology, the MAT manager. My report is over the past three months, from April through June 2020. If you see the PowerPoint, you can see the equipment distribution over those few months from April through there, about 30. And from April through June 30th, we received 67 new applications. That's a fairly typical number for that time period. I thought that during the pandemic and the shutdown, we would receive less applications, but we didn't. But the number of distributed equipment is 36. We distributed 36 pieces of equipment. One of the reasons for that reduction is, of course, because of the pandemic, where the state has ordered that evaluators cannot be with clients for assessment because of COVID-19. So we've transitioned over to re mote service s through phone calls, through video calls when possible. But we've found that the problem with most of these consumers who are hard of hearing is we can't conduct the meetings over the phone because they need the equipment in order to hear on the phone. Also, the children, if we can get connected with the children, that's fine, but once we send the demo equipment to that and they test it out, and it's a big process. It takes a long time. But it's better than nothing. So, 36 pieces of equipment is a sharp reduction from usual. We've been doing this remotely still through today. Once we've entered into phase 2, evaluators were able to go as long as they were using personal protective equipment and sanitizing areas. But the nursing homes and that would still not allow us to send people unless it was a client who lived within their own home, and then we were able to go. Still maintaining a 6-foot distance, and if there were children there, we had to make sure everyone was protected from any COVID transmission. Next on my list, we've had a number of counties where we've distributed equipment from April through June. You can see those on the PowerPoint as well. And on the next slide, it's the equipment distributed over the past year, so June 2019 through June of 2020. The next slide is the counties we've distributed to throughout the past year, from July 2019 through June of 2020.

Okay. So, next I'd like to talk about the focus groups. Jane Hager and I have been working to establish some focus groups. They were supposed to have been hosted in June. However, we've had to postpone those due to the coronavirus epidemic. Those have been moved to September. We have two weekends: September 19 and 20, and then the 26th and the 27th. We're going to be holding four groups of people with disabilities. Deaf and hard of hearing, DeafBlind, and low-vision/blind. And then speech and mobility. And cognitive. So actually seven different groups. So our first weekend, September 19th and 20th, we'll do four of those groups, piloting. Then the next weekend we'll have three groups to pilot. The reason for the focus groups is that this is very new technology. Telecommunications technology. And we think it's important to find out if it's critical to our program or not. And it's important to have community testing rather than just me doing the testing. So, for example, having a blind person or somebody with a speech disability, I can't test that. We need community members to do that, so we'll be conducting those tests and having them fill out surveys. We will also have Travis as part of these, doing RTT testing. That will be part of that. For some people in the groups, we'll test RTT to see how that works. So, September 19th and 20 is going to be in Towson. The groups will be the deaf and hard of hearing, the DeafBlind, the low vision and blind group. Our second weekend will be in Glen Burnie and it will be people with speech disabilities, mobility impairment, and cognitive impairment. We will then produce some materials after this meeting that will go out either today or tomorrow regarding those groups. Donna, our new outreach manager, she and I have been working together to craft these to get them looking just right so they've got the right information. Then we'll be distributing those. Hopefully we'll get a large number of people interested in being a part of our pilot program. We're going to take up to 10 participants per group across all of the groups. If there's a group that gets a significant number more than 10 people wanting to participate, we'll create a waiting list. In case one of the members that is selected is unable to be there that weekend, we'll fill that in and keep the number to 10. Also, if we decide to hold future focus groups, we'll utilize that waiting list to be part of the group.

Additionally, we're having some other events some September -- in September along with these groups that we hope can happen. If the pandemic continues to see increasing numbers throughout the states, we'll have to see what we're allowed to do based on the state's decisions.

So, speaking about our evaluators and outreach coordinators, Jennifer and Tarita, we've been hosting their new telecommunications products. RAS has a new, it's called a memory cell phone, for people who have cognitive disabilities or Alzheimer's, or people who are blind can use this piece of equipment as well.

LVS Tech has a new one called the blind shell cell phone that's very tactile in its use. It's not for deaf and blind, but for blind people who have hearing.

Lingraphica has a touch-talk device that's good for people who can't speak. Maybe they have, because of a tracheotomy or aphasia or because of a stroke, they can't articulate verbally anymore, but they're able to type and have the device verbalize for them.

There's a woman named Sarah Calhoun. She's an assistive technology specialist and has an app for speech and cognitive individuals. So she's got some new apps that we might add in to our tablet that we offer. We've got two more demonstrations that are going to be taking place August 6th. Square Glow is a Deaf-owned business for accessible lighting within the home. It can be used for video phones, for a captioned telephone. It can also be used for doorbell signaling. They're going to be adding a new mobile piece to that as well, so an iPhone or Android would be able to connect to those as well. It's called Square Glow, is the company. Next is Ellen Perkins, she's going to be giving a presentation about cochlear implants. We're adding that because we're starting to see a lot of consumers who have cochlear implants who don't have the experience of hooking up their assistive technology up to the cochlear am plants. So we want people to see the technology out there and which phones are compatible with the implant devices so we can add that into our assessment. So, the MAT application form is the next topic. This has been the MAT application form for a long time. But we've been working to revise it. To make it much better. Some of the revisions we're talking about are, it's multi page, multiple pages. So we've moved some things around to organize it better. Many of our consumers have been complaining about part 3 here, which is this long section. That they have to read all of that and agree to, you know, maintain state property, the devices that they're given, and then sign it. And once they sign it, then they have to send that in to our office, and there's nothing for them to be able to keep for their records to see what they agreed to. So we were moving some of that almost over to the last page, so before they send the application they can rip that part off and then just keep the agreement language. They don't sign on the agreement language any longer. They sign on the previous page. And I think that will be much better.

Additionally we've been working on the envelope. For the longest time, applicants were responsible for postage. And we've met with a few applicants who have said that, wait, I don't know -- I don't want to go to the post office and try to get the stamp or anything. So then they just didn't send us the application. So it's impacted the number of applications we get. So we have changed it to a business reply. And that is to help incentivize people to just go ahead and send those in to us. So we've been working with the post office to make sure we can have that added as a prepaid envelope, and we've realized that there's a lot of changes that come with that decision of how things are laid out and put there. And we'll soon be able to get that finished and get that sent over to get it printed on here.

DCF, the disability certification form, this is usually a person with a license who fills that out. To certify that someone has a disability. Some of the things we're changing there is that if the applicant has a speech disability they're required to have a speech language pathologist sign it. For those who -- applicants with mobility impairment, they're required to have a physical therapist fill that section out. The reason I'm talking about those two specifically is because as evaluators, people have seen people with a tracheotomy or who have had vocal cords removed, and realized that we're not experts in that part of the anatomy. And so then need to reach out to a doctor, and they get referred to an SLP, and the SLP has all the answers. So we just think it's better just to document that so that when an evaluator calls directly to the SLP, that they can help recommend the equipment to be used.

That's the same with the physical therapist. The physical therapists know kinesiology, body movements and mechanics, and it creates a better situation. Donna and I, we haven't started on this, but we'll be working on an event called Lunch and Learn. In partnership with SLP and physical therapist groups. So that we can partner with them so they can teach us a bit, and we can help them understand what equipment we have available, so that once we've got this on that document, it will be easy for people who get connected to them to have that portion filled out. Okay? We'll pause to switch interpreters... okay. Moving forward. The DCF section of the forms, a licensed practitioner is the person who must sign that, and they must also include their license number in this section here. And it says "Maryland State licensure/certification". We think we're going to remove the word "Maryland" from that line. The rationale being that we have heard from quite a number of people who live near the Maryland border in a rural area, mostly in the western part of Maryland, maybe some on the Eastern shore or eastern borders of Maryland. So they live near the Maryland state line, but their physician, their therapist, is across into the neighboring state. Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Virginia. They lived close by. So they don't actually live in Maryland. And it says Maryland license number. So talking with David and RAG has said that it does need to be approved by GABTR and MDOD, if everybody feels comfortable with taking off the requirement that it be a Maryland practitioner. Now, of course, if people live in the center of Maryland and they're sending us something that has a doctor from, I don't know, let's make up a place, someplace else, not here, but, you know, way outside of a 30-mile radius of where that person lives, then we may look at that. So we do need GABTR's approval for this change to remove the word "Maryland" on the form, before we go to MDOD for their approval.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: For clarification, you need approval from the board on what exactly again? Could I get that clarified?

>> Kevin Steffy: Sure. We need approval from the GABTR board and MDOD to take off the word "Maryland" on that line.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Remove it from what?

>> Kevin Steffy: On the DCF section, the DCF section has the word "Maryland state license number". We want to take off "Maryland" from there, so that people from a neighboring state can put their license number in.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Jason has his hand raised.

>> Jason Corning: Yeah. I was going to say, I know many small businesses who have got their MBE certificate that have struggled with getting a job, and so if they could be a little bit more strict about them being in Maryland, then maybe we would be able to help more small businesses be able to get clients. If they're going to businesses outside of the borders of Maryland, then are we creating a situation where Maryland businesses suffer? That I don't get the opportunity to work with people within my state? I wonder if it would be nice to support the Maryland businesses and support people to go to them.

>> Kevin Steffy: This isn't really about business. It's just the person who's a licensed professional, like a doctor or an audiologist. So it's not about businesses. It's a separate issue

>> Jason Corning: Got you. Thank you for the clarification

>> Kevin Steffy: Most of these people, for example, may live near Pennsylvania and have gone to their family doctor in Pennsylvania just across the border, and maybe they've gotten a job in Maryland or moved down here in Maryland but they want to keep their provider that they've been going to that's across the border into Pennsylvania. The doctor already knows who they are and their situation.

>> Jason Corning: Exactly.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Could you spell that out for what license please?

>> Kevin Steffy: Oh, it's here on the form.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: In the fine print... could you spell it? MD -- it says MD --

>> Kevin Steffy: MD State LIC cert, and then the hashtag or the number symbol.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: And which form?

>> Kevin Steffy: The DCF portion, part 4.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: And DCF stands for...

>> Kevin Steffy: Disability certification speaking.

>> Jason Corning: This is Jason speaking.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Go ahead, Jason.

>> Jason Corning: Bear in mind that for new business with the board discussion.

>> Kevin Steffy: Yes.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: One second. It looks like we have a question from Darrin. Darrin has a question. Go ahead... turn on your video, Darrin.

>> Darrin Smith: Hi there. I do apologize. I'm still trying to figure out my logistics here. But my question is -- awesome. Okay. So my question is, so, is that application form intended for Maryland residents only, or is it generally available to other Maryland businesses like, okay, so if there's a Maryland resident, for example, let me clarify, are you only doing it for them?

>> Kevin Steffy: It is a Maryland resident form.

>> Darrin Smith: Okay, got you. Just wanted to clarify that

>> Kevin Steffy: Yes, thank you for clarifying that. Applicants must reside in Maryland still. But their provider who has the license may be across the border

>> Darrin Smith: Cool, got you, okay.

>> Kevin Steffy: Okay. In addition to that, we have reached out to some other states just to check in. They've been having those same experiences, and they do allow people to cross the border, if it's within 30 miles, that radius. That's why I'm using that as a standard.

I feel like it isn't fair for an applicant to decline them and say you have to find a licensed provider within the state of Maryland. Because that creates a lot more work for them to find a new physician, get this filled out, just for a signature.

So, and the person that has mobility impairment, can't get out of their home easily to see a doctor, that creates a lot of difficulty.

I do have one more thing. Did you have another question, though, Al? Because I do have one more thing on my list.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Oh, well, I can wait. I can wait until you finish your report. Go ahead.

>> Kevin Steffy: So you're not talking about the application still?

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: No, it has to do with something you were previously discussing related to equipment. We can talk about that later.

>> Kevin Steffy: Okay. So the senior call checks. We abbreviate that as the SCC. In February, Arnold and I, we tested this with two different groups. We did some robocalls and live calls. Live calls meaning there was an actual person on the phone to check in. The robocalls were done through TTY, captioned telephone, and video phone. And they didn't work at all, obviously.

The live calls did work. They worked well. We went out and said, look, the registration form, it's really important on there that if it's TTY or captioned phone or video phone, that that be indicated. Because if a registrant checks one of those boxes, we know that it should either go to robot calls or the live calls. The live operators, if they see TTY or captioned telephone, they know they've got to go through the relay services to get to those folks. If they see a video phone, they know they call directly. So Arnold looked at that, and thought, yeah, that's important. So they're going to put that down on the registration form. But I haven't checked in since then to see if it's actually there or not because of other things that have taken my attention. So I think that we probably should check on that soon. And I think that concludes my report.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Thank you so much, Kevin. I do have a question. I'm wondering, it's my understanding that Apple's smartwatch has a feature what that would allow a person, if they fell, it would send an alert. If they didn't recognize any movement from the individual, they would send the alert to 911. What bothers me about SCC is I have to be near the TTY or within access of my video phone. What if, for example, I'm in the other room and not near either of these devices and need to make a call? Having something on my person like a smart watch, maybe you could be in dialogue with the SCC people to have that be a possible feature.

>> Kevin Steffy: I can bring that up with Arnold, certainly.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Going back to the previous conversation about equipment, devices for people who have aphasia or those who have suffered from a stroke or have speech challenges, I'm wondering, people like myself who cannot speak clearly, I'll use myself as an example. I have voice recognition software, this system. I try to use this. How can I use this? I'm wondering, is there some kind of -- these larger devices that we have for people who have aphasia, is there a consolidated version that fits into an app, something that I could use that would be beneficial, and I could still receive the voice recognition from other people who were speaking as well? Right now we have a lot of people using masks and it's very very difficult for me to communicate with those people, for example, out in stores. So something for you maybe to think about?

>> Kevin Steffy: Yeah, so touch talk, that particular device is not an app. It's software, but there is another app called Proloquo2Go that's very similar, but it's an app. But clients seem to prefer the touch talk because you turn it on and it's ready to go, the grid is there. With the app, Proloquo2Go, you have to have a pass code and get on the app. So it's a lot more drama there. So people prefer different things. People who are Deaf, I appreciate you letting me know, I'll think and do some research on that. I think you're right, with the coronavirus, it has an impact

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Yes, it's a very different world at this point.

>> Kevin Steffy: Yeah, thank you for that recommendation.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Yeah, anything that's an app would be fantastic.

Okay. Any additional questions, comments from the board, anything? Okay. It looks like Alex, if you could please turn your camera on. You have a question? It's supposed to be Alex Simmons, who is Deaf, so he reason signing for himself... Alex?

>> Kevin Steffy: Alex, turn your video on.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Alex says that his video is disabled. And he is the technology person for the Maryland School for the Deaf and he cannot turn on his video! Maryland School should be worried, irony. Okay. Hold on. Let's hold on a second and see if we can't get him up.

>> Maybe he can just type the question in the chat.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I think Alex is busy trying to work out the video.

>> Kevin Steffy: Yeah, he can ask it later.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Oh, okay. While we're waiting, David, are you going to stay through the meeting -- sorry, Kevin? Okay. While Alex solves this video issue, I guess we'll come back to his question later and keep proceeding forward. Any other questions other than Alex's? Going once, going twice... oh, there's something in the chat box. 6, 7, 9... oh, there he is! Okay.

>> Alex Simmons: All right, I got it. Hey there. Thank you, Travis, for enabling my video. It had been disabled. Awesome. Hey, everyone. Hope all of you are doing well. I am doing well myself. So, Kevin, my question is for you. You mentioned about the opportunity of focus groups. I'm wondering if there's been an e-mail distribution that I'd overlooked

>> Kevin Steffy: No, nothing has gone out yet.

>> Alex Simmons: Okay. I'm wondering how one might join a focus group.

>> Kevin Steffy: Yes, thank you for bringing that up. At the end of this meeting, we will start distributing that, or tomorrow. Probably more likely tomorrow we'll start distributing those communications. Donna and I, she's responsible for outreach, she's going to be distributing to Devaney, Facebook, other organizations. It will go through -- out to them. It will have an explanation of how to register through e-mail or giving us a call to be able to reserve a spot in the group, and we're only going to up to 10 people in each group, remember.

>> Alex Simmons: Great, thank you Kevin.

>> Kevin Steffy: Sure. Jason?

>> Jason Corning: Yeah, I wanted to talk about the focus groups as well. These are in-person, are they not, or are they virtual through Zoom?

>> Kevin Steffy: In person, yeah. Because we have to have --

>> Jason Corning: I do have concerns about the safety of DeafBlind participants.

>> Kevin Steffy: Yeah, it is hands-on, though. To use the equipment. So if we did it through Zoom, they wouldn't be able to test it. You know. They really wouldn't be able to know if it works for their particular use case. And so I understand the concern about safety, and what I would say to that is, if by September we feel that the numbers show that it isn't safe, that we would postpone that again. We certainly don't want to create a burden on people and be part of spreading the disease

>> Jason Corning: That's understandable.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I guess we have more questions coming in!

>> Hold while we change interpreters...

>> Hi, Ken. Is it Ken or Betty?

>> Betty Dodds: I don't know if I'm on, I can't see me, but that's fine.

>> Jason Corning: Hold on, this is Jason speaking. One moment? One moment. I'm trying to get my interpreter on screen.

>> Jason can't see the interpreter.

>> Jason Corning: One moment. I need to get Stephan on screen. Hello, hello... dang it, I can't see anybody. What's going on here? Go ahead... all right

>> Kevin Steffy: So Ken or Betty, go ahead and ask the question. Whichever one has the question

>> Betty Dodds: Yes. On the focus groups, I would like to make sure that you include senior citizens who are -- who may be like we are, that is, not particularly computer literate anymore, because technology has changed so much. And I also would like to include people who are late-deafened or late-blinded, because they are so out there on a limb by themselves. This isn't something they've experienced all their lives. They're trying to learn how to communicate with people with a new disability. So please try to find people, the association of late-deafened adults, I know, can get people information on the Maryland Relay. I would like to see them go the other way. But also senior citizens. Please. They are just really not in the best of shape. And I thank you for letting me ask my question.

>> Jason Corning: I agree with that completely.

>> Kevin Steffy: Great, yeah, thank you for raising that. We are not limiting this by age. Three years old all the way up. Whoever is interested to participate, we would like them to participate. If we get a large number of people that want to participate, we may set up another time to do some more focus group testing further down the road. Thank you, Betty.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: All righty. Moving right along to the next individual on our program, on our agenda, then we will have a break. The next person is Donna Broadway-Callaman.

>> Interpreter logistics, Donna, just a moment.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I'm just taking a drink break, got my Clorox here, one moment.

(Laughter.)

>> Jason Corning: Yup, I'm good. Okay,

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay, Donna, floor is yours.

>> Donna Broadway-Callaman: Good morning, everyone. I'm the outreach manager for Maryland Relay. I have been here since May 6th. This is my first GABTR meeting. Good morning, everyone. So some of the new changes that we have in Maryland Relay, as was spoken about earlier, we are now under the Department of Disabilities. So we're dealing with that transition. We have also updated all three of our logos, and here they are in color. I don't have a printer, so they're on my phone. And we will also be hiring a new outreach coordinator to deal with the real-time text integration. So we put out the advertisements for that. Hopefully we can bring somebody in soon, and Hamilton is taking the lead on that because they will be a Hamilton contractor, but they will work in our office. We're also promoting RCC, remote call captioning, with a new presentation handout, and by using it ourselves in our webinars and trainings. As you all know, it is kind of hard to do outreach and marketing in a pandemic, because a lot of the places that we go to they are closed to the public, like senior centers, libraries, and conferences. So a lot of our major conferences and events have been postponed, cancelled, or they are virtual. So how we are working to stay connected is we are doing advertising. Our outreach coordinators are doing webinars. We're attending virtual events. We're doing mailings, social media, videos. We're also promoting our program, the Maryland Relay program, and we're also working to do more outreach to fellow state agencies and fellow government agencies. And right now we are unsure of when in-person events will pick up again. We were kind of hoping that they would pick up by the fall, but a lot of events going until October have been cancelled. So the hope now is maybe late winter, maybe December, January. Somebody said March 2021. But we'll see. Hopefully by the end of the year, we can start doing in-person events again. And we are also working on our summer 2020 newsletter. That was delayed a little bit because we just decided on the logos that we're going to have. The logos are finalized. And Devaney is working on that content. Some of that content includes our move to the Department of Disabilities, a welcome for myself and Travis, it includes the webinars that our outreach coordinators are doing and also that the team is doing. Our Maryland Relay partner program, as well as the GABTR member profile for Lori Markland. Update on RTT and RCC. And just other information, including when our next GABTR meeting is going to be. So that's pretty much it for me. Does anybody have any questions?

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: This is Al speaking. Welcome on board, Donna. We look very much forward to working with you.

>> Donna: Thank you.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: You're doing an excellent job, really really good. Are there any questions from any members of the board for Donna at this time? I will give you the count! 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 -- ah, we have a taker! Alex

>> Alex Simmons: I have a question. Hi, Donna.

>> Donna Broadway-Callaman: Hello.

>> Alex Simmons: Very nice to meet you virtual if nothing else. So I work for the Maryland School for the Deaf, and we have a large Deaf community in the County of Frederick, and I'm wondering -- well, if you have any questions about hosting events in Frederick, feel free to reach out to me. You can use our facilities. We also have another campus in Columbia as well as our campus here in Frederick, Maryland, and we'd be more than happy to host events at either of our facilities. Just wanted to let you know that. In addition, I'm looking at the report. I'm looking at the summary of the meetings, and I'm wondering, would it be possible somehow to either edit or revise this, the notes, the flyers, how do I say... to make it more user friendly for the public? That way we could include it and send it out to the community in Frederick, send it out to our Maryland School for the Deaf community so they're aware of some of the things we're doing, announcements coming from TAM, information, things like that. I'm just wondering if there's a way to maybe condense this information, create something a little separate in different format for public consumption

>> Donna: Yes, that's something we can work on, our contractor Devaney works on things like that, and we can work on getting something that's friendly for the community.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: David had something you want to say?

>> David Bahar: I wanted to add, also, my response to the point that Alex made, which is an excellent one. I think that it would have been March and April that we were working with the superintendent Tucker at the School for the Deaf to put together a one pager of information in PDF format to give a quick and dirty about the availability of the programs and invite the students and staff and family members to apply for equipment. We have certainly shared that with the Maryland School for the Deaf Superintendent Tucker, and as well we've shared it among the medical professional community of practitioners, certainly those who were at the School for the Deaf, to sign off on those forms, and the logistics of who and where and how to do that is contained in that one-pager. I think that at the Maryland School for the Deaf, certainly it's one of our larger client bases in terms of incoming applications to participate in the programs. They're very, very well versed on that. We wanted to make sure to get some marketing together on how to undertake that application process

>> Alex Simmons: So not only applications just for information, like RTT, and 711 and 911, but the events. I think it's really good for the community to be aware of the events so that -- I think we've got a flyer, let me look... the PowerPoint presentation in there, there's all these different reports, maybe converting them into public-appropriate documents that can be reviewed if you think that's possible.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I believe, if I could jump in, I believe what Alex is trying to talk about is maybe more of a bulletin format or a bulleted list, something that just kind of highlights some key talking points. Might be a little bit easier for public consumption. Is that what you're referring to, Alex?

>> Alex Simmons: Perhaps something like that, maybe a bullet list with actual links to the event. Like an RTT event, or the other conference captioning service where the community can become aware of them by a link

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. And Donna, since Alex is a board member, and also happens to be a resident of Frederick in the Frederick County area, I strongly recommend that you leverage him as a resource. Because he can certainly help you. I correct in that, Alex?

>> Alex Simmons: Absolutely.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. One other thing. I was actually shocked and surprised to hear that you guys are still using Devaney for your PR firm. I remember when we first established Relay services here in the State of Maryland back in 1991, they were using Devaney at that time. That makes me wonder, have we ever had a chance or opportunity to maybe do some price comparisons with some other PR agencies, or maybe just some comparisons in terms of the ideas that other PR agencies might have? I mean, this has been the same approach since 91. We're going on almost 30 years at this point with the same PR firm. So I'm wondering, should we maybe look into and explore other agencies who might have something else to bring to the table? What are your thoughts, Donna?

>> Donna Broadway-Callaman: That's definitely something that myself, David, Travis, and Kevin can discuss and see if that's an idea that we want to move forward, or if we want to stick with Devaney. The four of us can talk about that. I don't see anything wrong with a little competition and a little price comparison. Looks like Travis has a comment.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Travis? You want to make a comment?

>> Travis Dougherty: Yeah, hello. So, I understand we've been working with David, but in my experience with Devaney, they've been great. They have been working with other states as well. But as soon as we got our new team in, David came in, I came in, Donna came in, they knew that we had a new team and a new approach, and they worked really hard for the new logo design, the new marketing materials, the new planning. They have been very responsive and very good. Very timely. As we've approached deadlines, they've made those deadlines. They really exceeded my expectations with their design work. We've had no complaints with them. I think they've been fantastic. We could compare them to others, but we also subcontract through Hamilton and some other folks for the film production. We're hiring Deaf film producers for that. We had looked at different production companies to be able to produce our tablet videos. So we're looking for ways to support them. Those other businesses. And so, I mean, I see where you're coming from.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Donna, anything else you want to add?

>> Donna: No, that's it for my presentation.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay, fantastic. Any additional questions from the board? Going once, going twice... giving everybody an opportunity to respond... all right. Thank you so much, Donna. We appreciate your report

>> Donna Broadway-Callaman: Thank you. It's nice to meet everyone. Thank you

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. We're now going to move into our 10-minute break. It's currently 11:15 according to my clock. Everybody please come back at 11:25. We'll see everyone at 11:25 to resume our meeting.

(Break.)

>> Travis Dougherty: Hello, everyone. I'll call Al back, see if we can get Al back, and get started again. Okay. Jason, are you there?

>> We've lost Jason.

>> Travis Dougherty: Oh, wait, here he comes. Great. Okay. Want to make sure we're all set. So I'll turn off my video.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. This is Al. Are we ready to proceed with the meeting? Jason, are you ready?

>> Jason Corning: Yes.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Great. So, to let everyone know, it's almost 11:30, so we might go a little past 12:00. I just got word that one of our interpreters can stay past our hard stop at 12:00. Travis is going to update me about the other interpreters.

>> Jason Corning: Can the CDI stay?

>> Bradley Christlieb: Yes. Not sure about Stephan…

>> Travis Dougherty: Okay. So Billy and Anne can stay.

>> Bradley: I can stay, not sure about Stephan Kennedy.

>> Travis Dougherty: So for the next presentations, Tarita and Jenny will do the presentations. However, the Hamilton report is not going to include a presentation, it's going to go directly to the questions. Melissa will answer questions if the report will have any. Thank you. That's how the agenda will run.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Thank you, Travis. Okay. I just got a message from Stephan Kennedy that he can go beyond 12:00 as well. And so we're now going over to Tarita. I see Tarita there. Welcome. The floor is all yours.

>> Tarita Turner: Hello, everyone. Can you hear me? I see some hands flying, so that means yes. Great to virtually see everybody this morning. It is still morning. We're very excited to be here and have the opportunity to speak. Traditionally, Jenny and I will stand before you and share all the amazing things that we get to do out in the community. Where we've been and how amazing this state and the residents are, and most of all, how much we love our job.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: One moment, point of order, Tarita. One moment. Jenny, can you disable your video at the moment so we can just have Tarita on screen?

(Screen closed).

Take it away, Tarita.

>> Tarita Turner: Awesome. So, yeah, we love to get in front of you guys and tell you pretty much how much we absolutely love our job. And then, COVID. So just like everybody else, in the middle of March, Jenny and I were charged with the task of figuring out the new normal. But we're outreach. So what does our job look like? If we can't go out and reach? Do we just sit home, tap our fingers, and wait for the world to open back up? Not a chance. With the amazing support of Hamilton and the TAM staff, we joined the virtual world absolutely headfirst. And this may be hard to believe, but during this time, our passion for what we do has grown tremendously. We have been trained to provide webinars, so we're still able to provide those informative, interactive, live, dare I say fun presentations. So if you see a post on Facebook, don't be shy, hit that registration button, join us, we would absolutely love to have you there. We also have had brainstorming sessions with outreach coordinators, so we get to discuss things like how to stay connected with the public, how to make exciting e-mails to share information with contacts. Yes, e-mails can be exciting! And even things like how to better navigate the digital world. Again, we're all in this together. And all of us have to do our part. Even though we're separated, we're never isolated.

Hamilton also has a yearly summit for its outreach coordinators, and this year it was 100% online, and it went brilliantly well. There was lots of discussion about innovation and authentic communication. What perfect topics to delve into. And I would like to give a special shoutout to my teammate Jenny. She gave a fantastic presentation during summit. I'm very proud. She did Maryland very, very well. I'll turn it over to her so that she can continue with our report.

>> Jenny Pearson: Good morning, everyone. This is Jenny Pearson, formerly Jenny Curran. We've only met twice since I've been married so you may not have known the name changed. As Tarita said, the face of outreach has completely changed. Through the months of April through June, Tarita and I did a combined 11 networking events and 12 webinars between the two of us. We are continuing to research future opportunities for webinars and networking events to connect with more of our community. Please let us know if you know of a group or club that would be interested in attending a webinar, and keep an eye on our social media account for upcoming public webinars to experience the thrill of a virtual presentation. We, another update about the scholarship award. We were thrilled to present the 2020 Hamilton Relay scholarship award to Joseph Hayden of Hebron, Maryland. He attended Mardela middle and high school, and will be attending Salisbury University in the fall to study sports medicine. Hamilton Relay also participated in a community project in order to show our support for senior citizens living in retirement communities with little to do during the pandemic, as well as to show our appreciation to staff keeping those seniors safe. We provided adult coloring books and colored pencils to senior citizens, as well as a sweet snack treat to staff working in these facilities. Total nationwide care packages were sent to 2273 residents, and treats were sent to 1411 staff members at 30 senior living communities nationwide. So we were really really excited to present that.

I'm also really excited to reveal that Nancy Rogers was awarded the 2020 Hamilton Relay Better Hearing and Speech Month award. She's a very active member of the greater Baltimore chapter of the HLAA and was instrumental in advocating for the installation of an electronic hearing loop in the main sanctuary at Beth Israel congregation synagogue, as well as this installation of a second hearing loop in the smaller chapel to honor the memory of another HLAA GBC member, Penny Kafka. That was installed in February 2020. It's because of these efforts and many others that we'll present Nancy with her award sometime this month via a Microsoft Teams meeting with her friends and family. If you'd like to attend a webinar, we're now providing RCC in every webinar that we present. Registration for webinars can be found on Facebook and Twitter. You can also reach out to Tarita and myself for registration information. Finally, Tarita is now accepting nominations for the Deaf Community Leadership Award. The deadline to submit the nomination is August 21st. So reach out to Tarita for information or to obtain a nomination form. Thank you very much for having me. Looking forward to seeing everyone in person hopefully sometime soon.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay, thank you so much to both of you, Jenny and Tarita, for your nice report. Now, you mentioned, which state are they from?

>> Jenny Pearson: In regards to what, Al?

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Nancy. She won an award, specifically, you mentioned

>> Jenny Pearson: Yes, Nancy is in Maryland. I believe she lives in Pikesville

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Oh, Maryland, okay.

>> Jenny Pearson: Every state that Hamilton has a contract in, we provide a better hearing and speech month award, and for Maryland, Nancy was our winner.

>> Arnold Eppel: --

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: The reason I asked is we have a vacancy on the board. I wondered if it would be possible to see if she has any interest in that. Thank you so much, thank you for your report. Any questions from the board for either Tarita or Jenny? Going once... going twice... I'm going to give everybody 10 seconds. Okay. Thank you both again. Okay. Now we'll have our reports from the board, starting with myself. I have no report. Other than, as I mentioned a little bit earlier in speaking with John, I would like to see a progress report for the transition from DoIT to MDOD program, and make sure the conditions that we outlined are being met. So that concludes my report. Any reports from any other members of the board?

>> Jason Corning: You should probably call people out by name.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I don't have a roster. That's the problem. I would say any board member who has a report, maybe type that into the chat box. And then I'll call on you. Jason has a report.

>> Jason Corning: I would like to add that this summer we've invited the four internships to develop apps. We've got four interns working on developing app for blind people, SSPs, food delivery services, communications, and I would like to see how these go as far as what government rules we need to follow and make sure that these apps are compatible with state requirements so that we can provide these as ready resources and can move through the process quickly. You know, rather than having to hire new staff and --

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: David, do you want to respond to that, Jason's comment?

>> David Bahar: Hello, everyone. Hi, Jason. Can you tell me a little bit more about your concern or question so I can better understand where you're coming from?

>> Jason Corning: Oh, it's not a report or concern. We're just, it's just stuff we're working on.

>> David Bahar: Excellent, thank you, Jason.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Alex, I'm sorry. Did Alex want to say something? I saw him pop up. Okay. Looks like we have no reports from any member of the board. Again, going once, going twice --

>> Ken Putkovich: This is Ken Putkovich, Al. I had a couple of comments. I was surprised to hear that the legislature had passed the transfer from the Department of Disabilities. I hadn't heard anything about that. Had not heard any news since we were up in Annapolis at the hearing. Second, I didn't know that the Relay contract had been awarded. That was a surprise to me also. And one other thing. The meeting, the... the stuff that was sent out was sent out yesterday. And I couldn't access it. I had a problem accessing it. So I was not able to review it. Hopefully in the future we can get it out a few days early so, in case people are computer illiterate like I am sometimes will be able to resolve their problems and be able to get to it and see it before the meeting. Those are my only comments. I don't really have a report.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: All right, David, did you want to clarify the surprise that Ken had? Seems he wasn't aware about the transfer. Do you want to speak to that?

>> David Bahar: Indeed. Hi there, this is David speaking. Yes, Ken, we did send out some e-mail distributions to the board to apprise them of the contract, and we have been in regular communication with Al about any number of updates with respect to bills that were underway being passed and with the transition issues. Well, I suppose we need to do a better job of communication with our board members to participate in the decision process and be apprised. I can certainly share those things with you if you'd like.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: I think the reason why people are a little bit surprised that the transition had been approved is because the governor didn't sign this, if I'm correct. The State House passed it, and then it was sent on to the governor, and the governor was supposed to sign it, and apparently he didn't sign it. And it became law automatically, after X number of days without a signature obviously. With the current pandemic and the current situation, I'm sure the governor had other, more pressing priorities that he had to attend to. So basically the way it reads is that bills will become law without a formal signature from the governor after X amount of days, am I correct in that, David?

>> David Bahar: You are indeed correct in that, Al. For the purpose of this legislative session, obviously we're not working in a normal set of conditions due to the pandemic. So the legislative session wrapped and they were scrambling to get everything passed and get out even earlier. So the governor decided that bills would be signed only if they were very significant. Otherwise they would be allowed to become law. So that will become the new norm for the moment. And we shared yesterday in a press release and on Facebook, and we distributed it among community channels that the transfer has officially taken place and that we continue to transition from DoIT to MDOD, gosh, it would have been maybe, Donna, correct me if I'm wrong, probably two weeks ago when we started that communication process. Thank you.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Donna, did you want to say something?

>> Donna Broadway-Callaman: No. I think you're pretty much right in our timeline. It's been about two weeks. It started on July 1st and then hopefully everything will be solidified by August. So if you're waiting for anything, if you need anything, give us until August for all of our processes to be moved over and everything to be in place. It's the state. The state moves a little bit slower in a pandemic, people working from home. So please give us until August.

>> Ken Putkovich: This is Ken again. David, could you please send at least to me a copy of the legislation in its final form?

>> David Bahar: Will do, Kenneth.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay. Looks like Travis wants to say something.

>> Travis Dougherty: I do indeed. Can we all return to gallery view? Excellent. With a brief response to Ken's comment about the lack of access, just so you know, it would have been a month or two ago we ran some tests of different web meeting platforms. Reason being the State of Maryland forbade the use of Zoom for all state functions. We were unable to use it due to security weaknesses. We tried other ones, but frankly nobody of them were friendly for people with disabilities. Finally two weeks ago we were able to use Zoom after all the failures we were able to approve. The Governor's Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing was with us as well getting movement on that, getting us access to the Zoom platform. With no luck. Until we talked to ODHH who had an account, and I really have to thank ODHH for allowing us to use their account for this meeting. To this day I don't have my own Zoom professional account. But if I were to, I would be able to embed PowerPoints, share information on screen in a clear and user friendly way. But, you know, we have been very much against the deadline of getting this meeting up and running. So we're doing our best with the situation at hand. But thank you for all of your understanding. And as we under take this workaround, because normal in person meetings are just not possible. This is a new set of circumstances. So we really appreciate you coming along with us for this ride.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Thank you, Travis, for the clarification. We appreciate it.

I agree and understand, Ken. We definitely should get the reports a little bit more in a timely manner, more than one day before the next meeting. Hopefully that will come to fruition. Any additional reports from any other board members? I'll give you the standard 10 seconds to respond. Okay. Seeing none, I would open up the floor to new business. And I understand that we do need to make a formal motion to remove the word "Maryland". Jason... you have the screen.

>> Jason Corning: Yeah, I would like it to make a motion at this time to remove the language, the wording of "Maryland" from the form, in order for potential clients to access their providers within a 30-mile radius in other neighboring states.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Second. Bear with me... looks like Alex seconds it. Any discussion on the motion? Board recognizes Jason.

>> Jason Corning: I move to close the discussion, given that we don't want to protract this over Zoom.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Well, Robert's rules of order and parliamentary procedure, we have to see if anyone is opposed. Anyone opposed to the motion? Standard 10 seconds to respond... okay. Discussion is now closed. Call for a vote. Again, any opposed? Counting down. Okay. Motion passes.

Now, moving on to any new business from anyone. Any input from the public?

Okay. Moving down our agenda, any announcements?

>> Travis Dougherty: Yes, I do have a comment from the public. Okay. The question was, this is from Heidi Burghardt. What relationship has TAM/MAT established with the Maryland School for the Deaf to ensure that their students have access to iPads or other types of telecommunications devices?

>> David Bahar: I can certainly respond to Heidi's question. We have been in touch with the Maryland School for the Deaf, with Superintendent Tucker, and we have shared with him that form in a PDF file. That file explains how to qualify for a MAT program participant and how to certify as a person with disabilities on that form and how to apply for equipment distribution. All of that, including the iPad s and the other devices, and we have certainly shared that at the Maryland School for the Deaf, and they have distributed among their community of students, faculty, and staff. Thank you for that question, Heidi.

>> Travis Dougherty: We have a last question from the public, and then I think we'll be done --

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: One second, one second. I think I saw a question... Donna

>> Donna Broadway-Callaman: I was just saying that in terms of outreach, what we're planning to do for fiscal year 21 once we're able to get in the field and our restrictions are lifted, we're definitely planning to strengthen our relationship with the School for the Deaf, both campuses. We plan to do more outreach, drop off more paperwork, be more involved, maybe do some sponsorships, increase some sponsorships, maybe sponsor the sports teams, activities, events, things like that. So we are planning on strengthening our relationship in terms of things we're doing as far as outreach.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Thank you. Okay. Any additional comments from either the board or members of the public? Travis?

>> Travis Dougherty: Yes, actually, I do have one final one from a member of the public. The same individual. This question is for Kevin and David. Al indicated that the Apple watch would be potentially available for people who experience a fall. Is MAT going to distribute that kind of equipment for people who are a fall risk?

>> Kevin Steffy: Hi, this is Kevin. For the Apple watch, they will be included in these focus groups for testing, and if things go well, then there's a potential for them to be added in. The iWatch is already in our RFP of devices on the list. So we did get that in there in case things go well in the testing.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Okay, thank you, happy to see that. Maybe you should check to see if that somehow could be integrated with the senior call check.

>> Kevin Steffy: Yes, and I have made a note of that. I will be talking with Arnold during the testing of the iWatch.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: Fantastic. Okay. Seeing no other announcements... okay. Then we'll move to adjourn. Nice. We're going to count to 10, again, give everybody an opportunity. Oh... David.

>> David Bahar: Yeah, if I may, if I may, this is David speaking. I think that Darrin indicated that he had a question

>> Darrin Smith: Yeah, can you see me clearly?

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: We can. I missed your chat, thank you

>> Darrin Smith: I wanted to ask two things. First, with the new bill that just passed, so we're placing a few people on different committees, right? So the committee on disabilities, ODHH, and maybe during the next meeting we can figure out who are being placed? Once COVID is dealt with? That would be the first comment. The second question would be, because I wanted to ask David what his perspective is on taking the senior call program from the Department of Aging and putting it under TAM. Would that be a better fit? Because it seems like maybe they don't know as much of what they're doing. So do you think it is feasible to do so?

>> David Bahar: Yes, I think that's a really good question, Darrin. My thoughts are firstly that we will have to make a change to the law in order for that to happen. So that's work that we have to do with the legislature, going to Annapolis, testifying, going that route.

Secondly, I'm sure that the SCC program does work under TAM as I envision telecommunications access is served by the senior call check program -- excuse me, telecommunications access is not particularly served by the senior call check program. That has more to do with health, wellness, safety, providing assistance. At least that's how Arnold characterized it to me in the past. It's a call-in. It uses a call, but it's really to check. And if they do answer the call, then we know they're okay, and if they don't, they do an in-person check to the house. So it's not really about telecommunications access. In terms of how we plug ourselves in that, it's just that frankly it was put on our plate. They wanted to fund it, and they put it on our plate. I don't think that it's the best operational fit for us. But if the legislature decides to go that route, or if you decide to go the legislative route to make a change, then you could advocate for it using general funds.

>> Al Sonnenstrahl: So I'd like to add on a personal note, I'm president of DSA, Deaf Seniors of America. And we'd like to develop a relationship between DSA and the AARP, and in Maryland specifically we have several senior clubs. I want to say 4. There's one in Frederick. There's one in Silver Spring. There's a third in Baltimore. And I believe the fourth is in Howard County. I'm not 100% on that. But there's four. And as of right now there's no relationship with the Department of Aging between those clubs. Other states, those relationships exist between their departments of aging and those senior citizen Deaf groups. So perhaps, MAT with SCC, that program, could develop some kind of linkage between the Department of Aging and the Deaf senior citizen clubs throughout the State of Maryland. I think that would be a very, very positive movement.

Okay. Any other comments? It is now 12:01! Jason is excited. Do you have other things to do, Jason, apparently? (Laughing).

Okay. I know people are home, they're looking for things to keep them busy. That being said, all right, I want to say it's been wonderful seeing everyone, see you all again in three months at our next meeting. Thank you everyone. Thank you to our interpreters as well. Thank you to our CART provider.

(The meeting ended at 12:01 p.m.)