



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

Larry Hogan
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford
Lieutenant Governor

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Vice Chair

February 1, 2019

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

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

Dear President Miller and Speaker Busch:

On behalf of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR), I am pleased to submit the annual report for the 2018 calendar year, in accordance with § 3A-503(d) of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

The GABTR members met four times in 2018, each time receiving reports from Telecommunications Access of Maryland (TAM) staff, representatives from the Maryland Relay service provider, Hamilton, and outside presenters. Highlights include continued quality customer service, increased outreach, and new public relations initiatives. In consultation with the board, TAM has been working on new initiatives that will likely launch in 2019. Those include updated marketing material, a smart phone pilot program, and a relay telecommunications facilitator service for Deafblind residents. These initiatives are helping to ensure that all Maryland residents, regardless of ability, have access to functionally equivalent telecommunications. Lastly, the board has been advising and aiding in solicitation efforts for the RFPs for evaluations centers and relay services. We were thrilled to learn that the new evaluation centers will begin work January 1. We hope they will expand the reach of the program and further increase the number of customers served. We are also looking forward to seeing the relay service RFP released and awarded early this year.

The Universal Service Trust Fund (USTF) surcharge remained at \$0.05 throughout the year. While the rate still covers the cost of the programs currently provided, TAM continues to monitor actions being taken by the FCC regarding any transfer of financial responsibility for Intra-state IP relay services. On June 8, 2018 the FCC adopted a Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (NPRM) and a Notice of Inquiry (NOI) for the Internet Protocol Captioned Telephone Service (IP CTS). In the NPRM, the FCC sought comments on various aspects of the IP CTS program, which included compensation, funding, administration, provider practices, and 9-1-1 call quality.



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In the NOI the FCC sought comments on establishing IP CTS performance goals and metrics to ensure quality and evaluate the effectiveness of the program. The comment and reply comment periods ended November 15, 2018; however, nothing further has been released by the FCC. TAM and GABTR will work closely together should the outcomes directly impact the operations or financials of the State.

This however, brings to light a critical issue regarding the protection of the USTF that concerns GABTR members. The fund was established and should be used exclusively to provide telecommunications access for individuals with disabilities. Use of the USTF for purposes other than those specified in the defining legislation may be detrimental to existing and planned Maryland Relay programs and services.

GABTR looks forward to continued work with TAM and DoIT and is excited to see what the next year brings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betty Jean Dodds". There is a small mark below the signature that appears to be "by BJD".

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

cc: The Honorable Michael G Leahy, Secretary, DoIT
Brenda Kelly-Frey, Director, TAM