



MARYLAND
GOVERNOR'S ADVISORY BOARD FOR
TELECOMMUNICATIONS RELAY

Larry Hogan
Governor

Boyd K. Rutherford
Lieutenant Governor

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

Alfred Sonnenstrahl
Vice Chair

January 1, 2020

The Honorable William C. Ferguson
President
Senate of Maryland
H-107, State House
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones
Speaker
House of Delegates
H-101, State House
State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401-1991

Dear President Miller and Speaker Jones:

On behalf of the Governor's Advisory Board for Telecommunications Relay (GABTR or The Board), I am pleased to submit the annual report for the 2019 calendar year, in accordance with § 3A-503(d) of the State Finance and Procurement Article.

The Board met four times in 2019, receiving reports from Telecommunications Access of Maryland ("TAM") staff, representatives from the Maryland Relay service provider, Hamilton, and outside presenters. In consultation with the Board, TAM announced new Maryland Accessible Technology (MAT) program evaluation centers. Marylanders can now receive evaluations for accessible telecommunications equipment in ten locations throughout the state. The Board and TAM have also jointly continued to work towards the inclusion of smart phones into the MAT program and the establishment of a relay telecommunications facilitator service for Deafblind Marylanders. The Board continues to be guided by the principle that, regardless of ability, all Maryland residents have access to functionally equivalent telecommunications.

After consultation with the Board, TAM and the Department of Information Technology (DoIT) released a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the operation of Maryland Relay call centers. In addition to text telephone (TTY) and captioned telephone (CapTel) services, as well as associated functionality and features, the RFP brings newer Real-time Text (RTT) capability to Maryland Relay. RTT is a primarily IP-based TTY-compatible technology that allows for the simultaneous, real-time transmission of characters as they are typed. In late 2016, the FCC passed a Report and Order in which it formally set into motion a long-term *Transition from TTY to Real-Time Text Technology* [31 FCC Rcd 13568 (16)]. The Board is proud that Maryland Relay will be one of the first states to adopt RTT into their telecommunications relay services programs.



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In October 2019, DoIT and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDoD) jointly signed a Memorandum of Understanding establishing joint supervision of the TAM program until such time as legislation can be passed to formally transfer TAM from DoIT to MDoD; towards that end, the Board collaborating with DoIT, MDoD and the Governor's Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing to develop the parameters of legislation to formally transfer TAM from DoIT jurisdiction to MDOD jurisdiction.

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

Sincerely,

Betty Jean Dodds

Betty Jean Dodds
Chair

cc: The Honorable Michael G Leahy, Secretary, DoIT
David J Bahar, Director, TAM