

# STATE OF RHODE ISLAND

IN GENERAL ASSEMBLY

JANUARY SESSION, A.D. 2012

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A N A C T

RELATING TO PUBLIC UTILITIES AND CARRIERS - ACCESS TO TELEPHONE  
INFORMATION SERVICES FOR DISABLED PERSONS

Introduced By: Representatives Naughton, E Coderre, Handy, and Keable

Date Introduced: February 15, 2012

Referred To: House Health, Education & Welfare

It is enacted by the General Assembly as follows:

1           SECTION 1. Section 39-1-42 of the General Laws in Chapter 39-1 entitled "Public  
2 Utilities Commission" is hereby amended to read as follows:

3           **39-1-42. Access to telephone information services for persons with disabilities. --** (a)

4 The public utilities commission shall establish, administer and promote an information  
5 accessibility service that includes:

6           (1) A statewide telephone relay service and, through the competitive bidding process,  
7 contract for the administration and operation of such a relay system for utilization of the  
8 telecommunications network by deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired persons;

9           (2) The adaptive telephone equipment loan program capable of servicing the needs of  
10 persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or those with neuromuscular  
11 impairments for use with a single party telephone line, [or a wireless telephone](#), to any subscriber  
12 who is certified as deaf, hard of hearing, severely speech impaired, or with neuromuscular  
13 impairments by a licensed physician, audiologist, speech pathologist, or a qualified state agency,  
14 pursuant to chapter 23 of this title; and

15           (3) A telephone access to the text of newspaper programs to residents who are blind,  
16 deaf or blind, visually impaired, or reading impaired with a single party telephone line.

17           (b) The commission shall establish, by rule or regulation, an appropriate funding

3 similarly identifiable line, trunk, or path to or from a digital network. Notwithstanding the  
4 foregoing, there shall not be any additional funding mechanism used to charge each residence and  
5 business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including PBX trunks and centrex equivalent  
6 trunks and each service line or trunk, or upon each user interface number or extension number or  
7 similarly identifiable line, trunk or path to or from a digital network, to recover the costs of  
8 providing the services outlined in subsections (a)(1), (2) or (3) above.

9 (c) The commission, with the assistance of the state commission on the deaf and hard of  
10 hearing, shall also develop the appropriate rules, regulations and service standards necessary to  
11 implement the provisions of subsection (a)(1) of this section. At a minimum, however, the  
12 commission shall require, under the terms of the contract, that the relay service provider:

13 (1) Offer its relay services seven (7) days a week, twenty-four (24) hours a day,  
14 including holidays;

15 (2) Hire only qualified salaried operators with deaf language skills; and

16 (3) Maintain the confidentiality of all communications.

17 (d) [Deleted by P.L. 2004, ch. 504, section 3.]

18 (e) The commission shall collect from the telecommunications service providers the  
19 amounts of the surcharge collected from their subscribers and remit to the department of human  
20 services an additional ten thousand dollars (\$10,000) annually commencing in fiscal year 2005  
21 for the adaptive telephone equipment loan program and forty thousand dollars (\$40,000) to the  
22 department of human services for the establishment of a new telephone access to the text of  
23 newspaper programs. The surcharge referenced hereunder shall be generated from existing  
24 funding mechanisms and shall not be generated as a result of any new funding mechanisms  
25 charged to each residence and business telephone access line or trunk in the state, including PBX  
26 trunks and centrex equivalent trunks and each service line or trunk, or upon each user interface  
27 number or extension number or similarly identifiable line, trunk or path to or from a digital  
28 network.

29 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect upon passage.

OF

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1           This act would extend the adaptive telephone equipment loan program for persons with  
2 certain disabilities, to include wireless telephones.

3           This act would take effect upon passage.

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