

**Angela Charles**

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**From:** Office of Commissioner Brown  
**Sent:** Monday, May 04, 2015 8:38 AM  
**To:** Commissioner Correspondence  
**Subject:** FW: Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. Budget  
**Attachments:** DSCA letter to the PSC 5-1-15.pdf

Please place the email below with the attached letter in Docket Correspondence for Consumers and Representatives, Parties and Interested Persons in Docket No. 140029-TP.

Thank you,  
Terry

*Ms. Terry Holdnak*  
*Executive Assistant to Commissioner Julie I. Brown*  
*Florida Public Service Commission*  
*2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard*  
*Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850*  
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**From:** Kim Gaut [<mailto:hipkgaut@yahoo.com>]  
**Sent:** Sunday, May 03, 2015 7:55 PM  
**To:** Office Of Commissioner Graham; Office of Commissioner Brown; Office Of Commissioner Edgar; Office of Commissioner Brisé; Office of Commissioner Patronis  
**Subject:** Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. Budget

Dear Chairman and Commissioners,

Attached, please find our letter to you regarding Florida Telecommunication Relay, Inc. and their proposed budget. This letter was finalized and approved at our DSCA quarterly meeting on Friday, May 1, 2015.

Best Regards,

***Kim Gaut***  
Executive Director  
Director of Programs

**Hearing Impaired Persons**  
**Service and Resource Center for Communication Connections**  
21450 Gibraltar Drive, Suite 8  
Port Charlotte, FL 33952  
941-743-8347 (Voice/TTY/Fax)

May 1, 2015

Florida Public Service Commission  
2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

Chairman Art Graham [Chairman.Graham@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:Chairman.Graham@psc.state.fl.us)  
Commissioner Julie Imanuel Brown [Commissioner.Brown@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:Commissioner.Brown@psc.state.fl.us)  
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Commissioner Jimmy Patronis [Commissioner.Patronis@psc.state.fl.us](mailto:Commissioner.Patronis@psc.state.fl.us)

Dear Chairman Graham and Fellow Commissioners,

I am the President of the Deaf Service Center Association of Florida and I am writing to you on behalf of our members, many of whom are Regional Distribution Centers (RDCs) for the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. Telephone Equipment Distribution Program. We are in receipt of the PSC Memorandum of April 23, 2015 which discusses the proposed FTRI budget. Our primary concern is staff's recommendation that FTRI cut their budget by \$851,774 as opposed to them transferring the necessary funds from the relay surplus account.

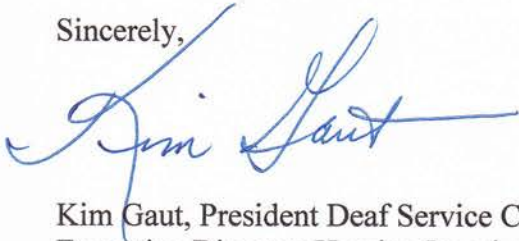
A reduction of this magnitude would be significantly detrimental to FTRI's ability to perform the vital outreach necessary for this program. We understand the reluctance of transferring funds set aside for the Video Relay Service. However, by staff's own admission "The FCC has acknowledged that, should it decide to mandate state funding, such a transition would come with a reasonable phase-in period of up to several years to provide states with sufficient notice". This fund has been sitting idle for many years now with no indication from the FCC that anything is imminent.

Even though the number of landlines is declining, the clients that we serve and the people who are in most need of this program are seniors who still have their landlines. FTRI has distributed 500,000+ phones since the inception of this program. Current estimates of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing population in Florida exceeds 3 million. We have come nowhere near providing this service to all the citizens who need it. It was the stated intent of the Legislature with respect to TASA to "establish a system whereby the citizens of Florida who are hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired have access to basic telecommunication services". The Specialized Telephone Equipment Distribution program is a vital part of this provision. By not fully funding the FTRI budget for this program, the outreach portion of the program will suffer. Without funding devoted to a comprehensive outreach strategy, many who deserve to participate in this program will not even know that it exists. Those of us on the front lines see this day in and day out. The RDCs simply do not have the resources to advertise at the necessary level to reach even a fraction of this community.

We urge you to fully fund the FTRI program budget as submitted under Option 1. Anything less would be a disservice to the hearing loss community who so desperately needs this assistance and, in our opinion, would not satisfy the intent of the Legislature.

Thank you for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Kim Gaut, President Deaf Service Center Association of Florida  
Executive Director, Hearing Impaired Persons, Inc.

DSCA Membership:

Rick Kottler, TASA Advisory Committee Member  
Executive Director, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Treasure Coast, Inc.

Julie Church, Executive Director  
Family Center on Deafness

Maureen Tambasco, Executive Director  
Citrus Hearing Impaired Program Services, Inc.

Jeffrey A. Thomas, Executive Director  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of Florida, Inc.

Lisa Bruna, Executive Director  
Deaf & Hearing Resources of Palm Beach County, Inc.

Margaret H. Brown, Regional Executive Director, Florida  
Center for Hearing and Communication

Donna Carlton, Executive Director  
Center for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing of Manatee/Sarasota

Dianna Druding, Executive Director  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Center of Ft. Myers

Amy Johnson, Executive Director  
Deaf & Hearing Services of Lake & Sumter Counties

Lynn Sinnott, President/CEO of Easter Seals Volusia Flagler  
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of Volusia and Flagler Counties