

State of Florida



Public Service Commission

CAPITAL CIRCLE OFFICE CENTER • 2540 SHUMARD OAK BOULEVARD
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0850

-M-E-M-O-R-A-N-D-U-M-

DATE: July 6, 2016

TO: Carlotta S. Stauffer, Commission Clerk, Office of Commission Clerk

FROM: Pamela H. Page, Senior Attorney, Office of the General Counsel *PHP*

RE: Docket No. 140029-TP – Request for submission of proposals for relay service, beginning June 2015, for the deaf, hard of hearing, deaf/blind, or speech impaired, and other implementation matters in compliance with the Florida Telecommunications Access System Act of 1991.

COMMISSION
CLERK

2016 JUL -6 PM 4:26

RECEIVED-FPSC

Please file the attached letters from Mr. Rick Kottler, Ms. Lynn Sinnott, Ms. Julie Church, and Mr. Jeff Thomas in the file for Docket No. 140029-TP. Please call me at x36214 should you have any questions. Thank you.

July 7, 2016

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

Chairman Art Graham Chairman.Graham@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Julie Imanuel Brown Commissioner.Brown@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Lisa Polak Edgar Commissioner.Edgar@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Ronald A. Brisé Commissioner.Brise@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Jimmy Patronis Commissioner.Patronis@psc.state.fl.us

Dear Chairman Graham and Fellow Commissioners,

I am the Executive Director of Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Treasure Coast, Inc. covering Martin, St. Lucie, Indian River and Okeechobee Counties. We are the Regional Distribution Center (RDC) for our area for the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI) Telephone Equipment Distribution Program. In reviewing the staff recommendation for the FTRI, I urge you to approve a budget that does not include a cut in the budget for outreach funding.

Although there has been a steady decline in the number of amplified landline telephones being distributed from year to year, there has not been a decline in the number of individuals who count on the equipment provided by FTRI, through the regional distribution centers as their lifeline to the world. Most of the Florida residents using these phones are senior citizens. They are not computer literate and do not use email, texting and other modern methods of communication. Often they are alone, and their family members live out of state. Without the ability to hear on the telephone, they become isolated and depressed.

This year, FTRI redirected its outreach funds to a new method of advertising using newspaper inserts. The regional distribution centers have seen a surge in the number of clients, since these inserts started running regularly. Mr. Forstall has been keeping track of the statistics for each center and can speak to the exact percentage of increase, but we all have observed increased foot traffic at our centers and at locations throughout the communities we serve.

To cut funding for outreach using this method of advertising would slow, if not stop the momentum generated in 2015/16. This is to no one's best interests, most importantly those Florida residents who most need this service. I strongly believe that by continuing to use the newspaper inserts, and perhaps using them on a year round basis, the population for which this law was written would be better served and urge you to do so on behalf of all deaf and hard of hearing Florida residents.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

Richard J. Kottler, Jr.
Executive Director
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of the Treasure Coast, Inc.
1016 NE Jensen Beach Blvd., Jensen Beach, FL 34957
rjkottler@dhhstc.org



Easter Seals of Volusia and Flagler Counties

Mission: To maximize the independence of individuals with special needs by providing exceptional service in advocacy, therapy, education, recreation and support services.

July 6, 2016

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2540 Shumard Oak Boulevard
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Commission Ronald A. Brisé Commissioner.Brise@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Jimmy Patronis Commissioner.Patronis@psc.state.fl.us

Dear Chair Brown and Fellow Commissioners:

Unfortunately, I am unable to attend your meeting on July 7th, and wanted to share my concern about the funding recommendations for FTRI 2016-2017.

As the Director of an RDC, I see first-hand the difference FTRI equipment makes in the lives of individuals with hearing loss. I also understand the importance of Outreach funding in assisting these individuals access the equipment. As a tax payer and a landline user, I fully understand the FTRI surcharge on my phone bill and appreciate the impact it has on my monthly bill.

During the last few years, FTRI has focused their efforts to improve outreach activities and make the RDCs more accountable. As an RDC that provides, on average, over 100 new phones each month, I fully recognize the need for an increase in the Outreach budget recommended by the FTRI Board in their approved budget for 2016-17.

I am very concerned about the proposed budget cuts that are included in Options 1 and 2 of the staff report and the proposal to decrease the FTRI charge on landlines. These cuts will adversely impact individuals with hearing loss and substantially decrease their quality of life. They will ensure decreasing services for individuals with hearing loss—at a time when that population in Florida is growing daily and more individuals lose their hearing as they age. I strongly recommend to the Commission that they approve the original FTRI budget as recommended by the FTRI Board of Directors.

Additionally, I suggest that the Commission re-evaluate their determination that new technology, such as cell phones, cannot be incorporated into the FTRI program under the original Florida statute.

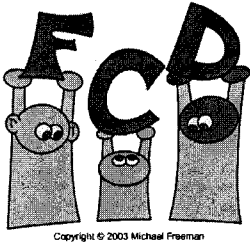
I appreciate the ability to make my recommendations known to the Public Service Commission.

Sincerely,

Lynn Sinnott
President/CEO

1219 Dunn Avenue · Daytona Beach, FL 32114
Phone: 386.255.4568 · Toll Free: 877.255.4568 · Fax: 386.258.7677 · Video Phone: 386.310.1157
www.esvf.org · email: info@esvf.org

*If you have arranged for Easter Seals, Volusia and Flagler in your estate plans, won't you please let us know?
Together, we can create life-changing solutions for children and adults living with disabilities, and to the families who love them.*



FAMILY CENTER ON DEAFNESS, INC.

12445 62nd Street N. #303, Largo, FL, 33773
727-501-2323 VOICE/TEXT 727-235-6285 VIDEOPHONE
www.fcdpinellas.org

July 7, 2016

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Commissioner Ronald A. Brisé Commissioner.Brise@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Jimmy Patronis Commissioner.Patronis@psc.state.fl.us

Dear Chairman Graham and Fellow Commissioners,

I am writing to you as the director of Regional Distribution Center (RDC) 27 for the Florida Telecommunications Relay, Inc. (FTRI) Telephone Equipment Distribution Program in Pinellas County, Florida. In reviewing the staff recommendation for the FTRI 2016/17 budget, I urge you to approve a budget that does not include a cut in outreach funding.

Although there has been a steady decline in the number of amplified landline telephones being distributed from year to year, there has not been a decline in the number of individuals who count on the equipment provided by FTRI, through the regional distribution centers as their lifeline to the world. Most of the Pinellas County residents using these phones are senior citizens. They are not computer literate and do not use email, texting and other modern methods of communication. Often they are alone, and their family members live out of state. Without the ability to hear on the telephone, they become isolated and depressed.

This year, FTRI redirected its outreach funds to a new method of advertising using newspaper inserts. This regional distribution center has seen a surge in the number of clients, since these inserts started running regularly. Mr. Forstall has been keeping track of the statistics for each center and can speak to the exact percentage of increase, but we all have observed increased foot traffic at our center and at locations throughout the communities we serve.

To cut funding for outreach using this method of advertising would slow, if not stop the momentum generated in 2015/16. We strongly believe that by continuing to use the newspaper inserts, and perhaps increasing the budget to use them on a year round basis, the population for which this law was written would be better served and we urge you to do so on behalf of all deaf and hard of hearing Florida residents.

Sincerely,

Julie Church,
Executive Director

July 7, 2016

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2540 Shumard Oak Blvd.
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0850

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Commissioner Ronald A. Brisé Commissioner.Brise@psc.state.fl.us
Commissioner Jimmy Patronis Commissioner.Patronis@psc.state.fl.us

Dear Chairperson Brown and Fellow Commissioners,

I am the Executive Director for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of Florida, a regional distribution center for FTRI. In reviewing the staff recommendation for FTRI, we urge you to approve a budget that does not include a cut in the budget for outreach funding.

Although there has been a steady decline in the number of amplified landline telephones being distributed from year to year, there has not been a decline in the number of individuals who count on the equipment provided by FTRI, through the regional distribution centers as their lifeline to the world. Most of the Florida residents using these phones are senior citizens. They are not computer literate and do not use email, texting and other modern methods of communication. Often they are alone, and their family members live out of state. Without the ability to hear on the telephone, they become isolated and depressed.

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Thank you for your kind consideration of our request.

Sincerely,

Jeff Thomas, Executive Director
Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services of Florida Inc
8610 Galen Wilson Blvd
Port Richey, FL. 34668