**PENNSYLVANIA**

# **PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**Harrisburg, PA 17105-3265**

Public Meeting held January 17, 2019

Commissioners Present:

Gladys M. Brown, Chairman

David W. Sweet, Vice Chairman

Norman J. Kennard

Andrew G. Place

John F. Coleman, Jr.

Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay M-00900239

Service Advisory Board

**OPINION AND ORDER**

**BY THE COMMISSION:**

 The Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) is a communications service regulated by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) that offers a person with disabilities the ability to communicate “by wire or radio with a hearing individual in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of a person who does not have a disability to communicate using voice communication services by wire or radio,” *i.e.* access to the Public Switched Telephone Network in the same manner as a person without disability.[[1]](#footnote-2) TRS offers persons who are hearing, deaf, and hearing or speech impaired three ways to connect to the service using various means: Traditional Telephone Relay, Video Relay and Internet Relay. Users who access TRS by telephone simply dial 7-1-1 to connect to a skillfully-trained Communications Assistant, or CA, who follows a strict code of ethics and confidentiality for telephone TRS communications. The CA then relays messages to the other person. TRS is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

By Order entered May 29, 1990 (*May 29, 1990 Order*), the Commission established the Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board (TRS Advisory Board) for the purpose of reviewing the success of TRS in Pennsylvania. The TRS Advisory Board was also assigned the task of identifying any additional improvements which might need to be implemented to ensure the continued success of the TRS program. The TRS Advisory Board is composed of the following representatives: Hamilton Relay Inc. (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms); Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms);[[2]](#footnote-3) the Pennsylvania Telephone Association (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms); the Commission (2 representatives who may serve unlimited terms), the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry’s Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ODHH) (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms), and from the community of persons who are, or who have experience with, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those with language and speech disorders (7 representatives who may serve up to two two-year consecutive terms). The Board meets quarterly in Harrisburg and functions as a user group providing guidance in such areas as problem solving and future enhancements.

The *May 29, 1990 Order*, as noted, provides for 7 representatives from the community of persons who are, or who have experience with, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those with language and speech disorders, to serve on the TRS Board. The TRS Advisory Board has received the Application of Ms. Sharon Behun for membership on the Board. The TRS Advisory Board has unanimously expressed its approval of Ms. Behun’s participation as a member of the TRS Advisory Board. Accordingly, this Order shall memorialize the appointment of Ms. Sharon Behun to the TRS Advisory Board for a term as community representative.

Ms. Behun has been working with people who are deaf, deaf/blind, and hard of hearing in various capacities over the past twenty years in Pennsylvania as an advocate, registered sign language interpreter, and former Director of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Labor & Industry’s Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ODHH). Currently, she is the Director of Program Development & Expansion at the Center for Independent Living of Central PA (CILCP). This is a position which allows her to expand the network of providers and key stakeholders into the disability community.

As expressed in a statement of interest presented with her application, Ms. Behun advises that by being a member of the TRS Board, she will be able to act as a liaison between the Board and the community, work more closely with the PA Relay Outreach Coordinators, provide input to the Board from a provider or business perspective, as needed, and provide input and/or collaborate on education and outreach, which is a priority.[[3]](#footnote-4) As noted, the TRS Advisory Board has unanimously expressed its approval of Ms. Behun’s participation as a member of the TRS Advisory Board. On these bases, we conclude that Ms. Sharon Behun will be a beneficial addition to the TRS Board and the community it serves; **THEREFORE,**

 **IT IS ORDERED:**

 1. That the appointment of Ms. Sharon Behun to the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory for a two-year term as community representative is approved.

2. That a copy of this Opinion and Order be served on:

Ms. Sharon Behun

2741 N. 4th Street

Harrisburg, PA 17110-2011

e-mail: Sharonbehun@comcast.net

 **BY THE COMMISSION,**

Rosemary Chiavetta

 Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: January 17, 2019

ORDER ENTERED: January 17, 2019

1. 35 P.S. § 6701.2; *see also* 35 P.S. § 6701.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Hamilton Relay has replaced AT&T, the previous service provider, as the current certificated TRS service provider for Pennsylvania and is the contracted Captioned Telephone Relay provider for Pennsylvania. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. Most recently, in 2018, the CILCP hosted the PA Relay’s annual town hall meeting. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)