**PENNSYLVANIA**

# **PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION**

**Harrisburg, PA 17120**

Public Meeting held April 15, 2021

Commissioners Present:

 Gladys Brown Dutrieuille, Chairman

 David W. Sweet, Vice Chairman

 John F. Coleman, Jr.

Ralph V. Yanora

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 deaf, 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 (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 24 hours a day, 7 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 three, two-year consecutive terms).[[3]](#footnote-4) The TRS Advisory 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 Advisory Board. The TRS Advisory Board has been advised that Ms. Sharon Behun, a current member of the TRS Advisory Board whose term expired January 17, 2021, desires to serve a second, consecutive two-year term as a community representative with her new term expiring on January 17, 2023.

Ms. Behun’s credentials and resume are well known to the Commission. Ms. Behun has been working with people who are deaf, deaf/blind, and hard of hearing in various capacities over the past 20 years in Pennsylvania as, *inter alia*, 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).[[4]](#footnote-5) Ms. Behun continues to be active in various associations which allow her to expand the network of providers and key stakeholders into the disability community.

As noted in our Order entered, January 17, 2019, Ms. Behun has advised that by being a member of the TRS Advisory Board, she will be able to act as a liaison between the TRS Advisory Board and the community, work more closely with the PA Relay Outreach Coordinators, provide input to the TRS Advisory Board from a provider or business perspective, as needed, and provide input and/or collaborate on education and outreach, which is a priority. Based on the foregoing we find that Ms. Sharon Behun’s continued service on the TRS Advisory Board will be beneficial; **THEREFORE,**

 **IT IS ORDERED:**

 1. That the appointment of Ms. Sharon Behun to the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board for a two-year term ending January 17, 2023, as community representative is approved.

2. That a copy of this Opinion and Order be served on Ms. Sharon Behun.

 **BY THE COMMISSION,**

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Rosemary Chiavetta

 Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: April 15, 2021

ORDER ENTERED: April 15, 2021

1. 35 P.S. § 6701.2; *see also* 35 P.S. § 6701.4. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. Hamilton Relay is the current certificated TRS service provider for Pennsylvania. *See* Docket No. A-2014-2447601. Hamilton Telephone Company is the contracted Captioned Telephone Relay Service provider for Pennsylvania. *See* Docket No. A-311355. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. At a special meeting held on April 12, 2019, the TRS Advisory Board amended its By-Laws to include, *inter alia*, the addition of the TDDP implementing entity as a representative of the TRS Advisory Board and the expansion of the number of terms the community representatives may serve from two to up to three, two-year terms. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. During her tenure in ODHH, Ms. Behun was an L&I representative on the TRS Advisory Board. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)