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Marylou Sudders
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Heidi L. Reed
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The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health
and Human Services

Massachusetts Commission
for the
Deaf and Hard of Hearing

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April 28, 2015

Ms. Sara Clark,
Secretary and Paralegal Specialist
Massachusetts Department of Telecommunications and Cable
1000 Washington Street, Suite 820
Boston, Massachusetts 02118-6500

RE: D.T.C. 15-2, Petition of the State 911 Department to Adjust the Enhanced 911 Surcharge

Dear Ms. Clark:

Thank you very much for the opportunity to comment on behalf of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing in support of the Petition of the State 911 Department to Adjust the Enhanced 911 Surcharge. I am the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing ("the Commission") and serve as a member of the State 911 Commission.

The Commission operates with the vision of serving and protecting Deaf and Hard of Hearing people in the Commonwealth where universal access is the standard for ensuring that all people are able to fully participate in all areas of life. The Commission strives to ensure that our constituents' most essential needs are met and to enable the Commonwealth to be accessible and safe for adults and children who are deaf and hard of hearing. Access to emergency services are a vital need for the Commission's constituents, and the Commission supports the efforts of the State 911 Department in the administration of disability access programs and the introduction of new technologies, particularly Next Generation 911, to continue to meet these goals.

The State 911 Department's enabling statute, Chapter 223 of the Acts of 2008, requires that the State 911 Department administer disability access programs throughout the Commonwealth. The State 911 Department provides and maintains a specialized customer premises equipment distribution service for residential subscribers who are certified to be in need of such equipment. The State 911 Department also coordinates and administers the telecommunications relay services and captioned telephone relay

services throughout the Commonwealth. The Commission works cooperatively with the State 911 Department to review and procure these necessary services. The Commission also receives and processes applications from persons seeking specialized equipment in order to access the Commonwealth's enhanced 911 services. These services would not be possible without adequate funding support.

In addition to the disability access programs, the Commission supports the transition from the legacy enhanced 911 system to the Next Generation 911 system. This is because Next Generation 911 will ultimately allow for additional data to be sent with the voice call, including text to 911 with picture and video, medical records of the caller, etc. In the short term, Next Generation 911 will allow for texting to 911 without picture and video. Text to 911 is a critical need for the safety of people who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing or have a speech disability. Currently, the only way for these constituents to contact 911 directly is by using a TTY device. TTY is an archaic means of communication and has mostly been abandoned in exchange of using text to communicate. The introduction of the new Next Generation 911 technology, and the necessary funding for such technology, is critical to the Commission's constituents.

For all of the foregoing reasons, I respectfully request that the Department of Telecommunications and Cable approve the Petition of the State 911 Department to Adjust the Enhanced 911 Surcharge as soon as possible.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to address this matter of importance to the Commission and the disabled community.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Heidi L. Reed". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Heidi L. Reed, Commissioner