

**Testimony of Terry Morrell
Director for the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened
Maine Department of Labor**

Regarding L.D. 258

**"An Act Making Unified Appropriations and Allocations from the General Fund
and Other Funds for the Expenditures of State Government and
Changing Certain Provisions of the Law Necessary to the Proper Operations of
State Government for the Fiscal Years Ending June 30, 2023, June 30, 2024 and June 30, 2025"**

March 1, 2023

Good afternoon, Senator Rotundo, Senator Lawrence, Representative Sachs, Representative Zeigler, and members of the Joint Standing Committees on Appropriations and Financial Affairs and Energy, Utilities and Technology. My name is Terry Morrell, and I am the Director of the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and Late Deafened (DHHLD) within the Maine Department of Labor. I appreciate the opportunity to present to you the 2024-25 biennial budget for the Telecommunications Relay Services Council Fund.

The budget for the Council fund can be found on page A-634.

As part of the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, our division provides vocational rehabilitation services, as well as information, referrals, and advocacy on behalf of Mainers who are Deaf, hard of hearing and late deafened. Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) and captioned telephone service (CapTel or CTS) allow people who are Deaf, hard of hearing or have speech difficulties to communicate with hearing people. With TRS, an individual can call a single number, 7-1-1, which connects them to the TRS provider for the state who acts as a translator between the hearing and the deaf or hard of hearing individual in the telephonic communication. An important benefit of the system is that it does not require both parties on the call to have assistive devices. This service is vital, not only for health and safety, but the emotional wellbeing of our community members who are able to stay connected with family, friends, and colleagues.

The TRS Council, of which I am a member, prepares an annual budget to cover the costs of the telecommunications relay services vendor and adaptive equipment, as well as communication and pilot efforts meant to promote and increase the use of TRS. Funds are transferred from the Universal Service Fund to this fund for this state and federally mandated service.

The budget and funds transferred may not exceed \$600,000 per year, which ties to the allocation you see on page A-634.

Thank you for the consideration of this information. I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.