



Teresa S. Pierce  
Senator, District 25

THE MAINE SENATE  
131st Legislature

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*Testimony of Senator Teresa S. Pierce introducing*  
**LD 1065, An Act to Improve the Telecommunications Relay Services Council by  
Reducing Its Membership and Allowing for the Hiring of an Executive Director**  
*before the Joint Standing Committee on Energy, Utilities and Technology*  
**April 13, 2023**

Senator Lawrence, Representative Zeigler, and Esteemed Members of the Energy, Utilities, and Technology Committee, my name is Teresa Pierce, and I represent Senate District 25, encompassing Falmouth, Cumberland, North Yarmouth, Yarmouth (majority), Gray, and Long Island. Today I am pleased to introduce LD 1065, An Act to Improve the Telecommunications Relay Services Council by Reducing Its Membership and Allowing for the Hiring of an Executive Director.

Telecommunications Relay Services (TRS) and captioned telephone service (CapTel or CTS) are telecommunications services that allow hearing people and people who are deaf, hard-of-hearing, or speech-disabled to communicate via the telecommunications system. The Maine Legislature has established the Maine Telecommunications Relay Services Council as the entity that is responsible for ensuring that these services are provided throughout the state on a continuous and reliable basis for a reasonable cost and in compliance with state and federal laws and regulations.

The need to improve this council is great, Telecommunications relay services are very important for those in the deaf, hard-of-hearing, late deaf or speech-disabled to continue to communicate. With an aging population, the work of the Council is all the more vital. This bill would allow for the necessary improvements. Currently, the council is all-volunteer, charged with ensuring the relay service continues throughout the state. Plagued by the retirement of the council Chair and other key council members, the TRS council has had trouble recruiting and retaining officers to conduct the business of the Council.

This bill would reduce positions on the council, which historically have been very difficult, and make it nearly impossible for the Council to have a quorum, which is necessary to conduct business. In its current form, the Council is also operation without key directions, such as a Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary, which puts the continuation of TRS at risk. By hiring a dedicated, part time Executive Director, the council would be able to keep up with demand and function in a manner that will eliminate the risk of a decline in the quality of services.

There is no increase in funds necessary to create this position, as the existing fund, administered by the PUC. It is my understanding that the existing budget has sufficient funds to cover this position.

Thank you for your consideration and I am sure that others that will follow me will be able to answer questions in more detail.