



## 1 A P P E A R A N C E S

2 CURTIS WILLIAMS, PSC Staff

3 JACOB IMIG, PSC Staff

4 CHARLES MURPHY, PSC Staff

5 CECIL BRADLEY, FTRI Executive Director

6 BRETT BASCOM, FTRI Business Manager

7 ELISSA MORAN, FTRI Outreach Manager

8 AMELIA MAULDIN, FTRI EDP manager

9 JEFFREY BRANCH, Sprint/T-Mobile Account Executive

10 JANE E. JOHNSON, Florida Association of Centers for  
Independent Living and TASA Advisory Committee

11

12 MARIAH DELGADO, Deaf and Hearing Services of Lake and  
Sumter County

13 TRACY PEREZ, The Center for Hearing and Communication

14 AMY TURNER, Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Center Executive  
Director

15

16 KIM GAUT, Deaf and Hard-of-hearing Services of Charlotte  
County Executive Director17 DEBBE HAGNER, The Florida Coordinating Council for the  
Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing

18

19 Whitney Doyle, FFAST

20 PAUL TOBIN, FFAST

21

22 BRENDAN PALERMO, member of the public

23

24

25

## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Good afternoon, everyone. This  
3 is Curtis Williams with the Office of Industry  
4 Development and Market Analysis. I'll be chairing  
5 today's meeting. And we'll go ahead and get  
6 started.

7 Joining me is Charles Murphy and Jacob Imig  
8 with the -- Imig with the Office of General  
9 Counsel.

10 Everyone should have received a copy of the  
11 agenda and materials. So, at this time, we will  
12 proceed as printed. The first order of business is  
13 to have our attorney read the notice.

14 MR. IMIG: By notice issued October 7th, 2021,  
15 this time and place was set for a meeting in Docket  
16 Nos. 20210049-TP and 20170039-TP to discuss current  
17 relative issues related to relay. The purpose of  
18 the hearing is more fully set out in the notice.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Imig.

20 Before we proceed, I would like to cover some  
21 preliminary matters. Please keep your phones on  
22 mute until you're ready to speak.

23 Also, please state your name before speaking,  
24 for the record. It is important that you state  
25 your name each time so you will be correctly

1 identified in the transcript by the court reporter.

2 We will take appearances at this time. We  
3 will start with our presenters, Florida  
4 Telecommunications Relay, Sprint T-Mobile, Florida  
5 Association of Centers for Independent Living,  
6 followed by the TASA Advisory Committee members,  
7 and others.

8 So, at this time, Florida Telecommunications  
9 Relay -- we'll take appearances from -- from you  
10 all.

11 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom, business  
12 manager at Florida Telecommunications Relay.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Brett. Welcome.

14 MR. BASCOM: Thank you.

15 MS. MORAN: Hello, there. These is Elissa  
16 Moran, outreach manager from Florida  
17 Telecommunications Relay.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: Hello, Elise.

19 MS. MORAN: Elissa.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Elissa. Thank you.

21 MS. MORAN: You're welcome.

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Any others from --

23 MS. HAGNER: This is Debbe --

24 MR. BRANCH: This is Jeff for --

25 MR. WILLIAMS: Are there any others from

1 Florida Telecommunications Relay?

2 MR. BRANCH: Yes, this is Jeff Branch here.

3 And, I'm sorry, I was trying to speak earlier and

4 my mute wasn't working. I'm also here with

5 T-Mobile. So, welcome, everyone.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Welcome.

7 MS. MAULDIN: Yes, this -- can you guys hear

8 me?

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

10 MS. MAULDIN: This is Amelia Mauldin, the EDP

11 manager with the Florida Telecommunications Relay.

12 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Welcome.

13 MS. DELGADO: This is Mariah Delgado with Deaf

14 and Hearing Services of Lake and Sumter County.

15 And I am A regional distribution center with FTRI.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you, and welcome.

17 So, for --

18 MS. PEREZ: Hi, this is Tracy Perez with the

19 Center for Hearing and Communication, and we are

20 also a regional distribution center for FTRI.

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Welcome, and thank you.

22 MS. TURNER: This is Amy Turner, executive

23 director of the Deaf and Hard-of-Hearing Center in

24 Fort Myers Florida. We are also a regional

25 distribution center for FTRI.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Welcome.

2 MS. GAUT: This is Kim Gaut. I'm the  
3 executive director of Deaf and Hard-of-hearing  
4 Services of Charlotte County, and we are a regional  
5 distribution center for FTRI.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Thanks for joining.

7 MS. HAGNER: This is Debbe Hagner representing  
8 the Florida Coordinating Council for the Deaf and  
9 Hard-of-Hearing.

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Welcome, Debbe. Thank you.

11 And we -- are there any other members of the  
12 TASA Advisory Committee present?

13 And earlier we did hear from Jeffrey Branch  
14 with Sprint T-Mobile. Are there any other  
15 participants representing Sprint T-Mobile?

16 MR. BRANCH: This is Jeff Branch. No, there  
17 are not. I am the sole representative today from  
18 Sprint T-Mobile.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you, Jeff.

20 Are there any other participants participating  
21 in the call this afternoon?

22 MS. DOYLE: This is Whitney Doyle from FFAST.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Whitney, and  
24 welcome.

25 MS. JOHNSON: This is Jane Johnson on the --

1 for the TASA Committee, but also representing the  
2 Florida Association of Centers for Independent  
3 Living.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Jane.

5 MR. TOBIN: And this is Paul Tobin from FFAST.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Welcome, Paul.

7 Okay. Are there others?

8 Hearing none, at this time, we will proceed  
9 with the presentations.

10 MR. BRADLEY: Hello, there. Hi, excuse me.  
11 Yes, I didn't speak yet. Hi. My name is Cecil  
12 Bradley, and I'm from out of state, but I'm  
13 watching and listening to the meeting. So, thank  
14 you for having me, everyone.

15 MR. WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you, Cecil.  
16 And welcome to the meeting. I -- I was going to  
17 mention to the group during my presentation that  
18 you are the new -- newly-hired executive director  
19 for the Florida Telecommunications Relay. So, I  
20 will go ahead and do that now.

21 Again, Florida Telecommunications Relay has  
22 been in the process of searching for an executive  
23 director and recently hired Mr. Bradley, who  
24 actually served on the TASA Advisory Committee for  
25 the past 25 years.

1           Most recently, he served as the vocational  
2 administrator of deaf and hard-of-hearing and deaf/  
3 blind services for the Division of Rehabilitation  
4 within the Florida Department of Education.

5           So, welcome, Cecil. And we look forward to  
6 working with you. Did you want to make any -- any  
7 initial comments at this time?

8           MR. BRADLEY: Hello, there. Thank you. No.  
9 No. Just thank you. Not at this time. I'm just  
10 here listening in and joining the discussion.  
11 Thank you.

12           MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Well, again, welcome.  
13 And we look forward to working with you.

14           So, we -- we've taken all the appearances.  
15 Are -- we had -- I think someone just joined. Do  
16 we have anyone who joined just a -- a few moments  
17 ago --

18           MR. PALERMO: Yeah --

19           MR. WILLIAMS: -- and after we took  
20 appearances?

21           MR. PALERMO: Yeah, that was me, Brendan  
22 Palermo.

23           MR. WILLIAMS: And who are you representing --

24           MR. PALERMO: I'm just --

25           MR. WILLIAMS: -- Brendan?

1 MR. PALERMO: I'm just a member of the public.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Just a member of the  
3 public?

4 THE COURT REPORTER: His last name.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Can you -- can you re- --  
6 repeat your last name for the record?

7 MR. PALERMO: Yeah, Palermo, P-a-l-e-r-m-o.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you. We have it.

9 Okay. So, at this time, we will -- we will  
10 proceed with the presentations. Again, I'm Curtis  
11 Williams. And I will provide the Commission  
12 update, followed by the Florida Telecommunications  
13 Relay's presentation, and then Sprint T-Mobile's  
14 update. And we will conclude with the Florida  
15 Association of Independent Living presentation.

16 My presentation is primarily going to focus on  
17 the Commission's recent request for proposals for  
18 relay service. If you participated in the -- last  
19 meeting we had, we -- we gave a -- a presentation,  
20 an overview on that process. It was just getting  
21 started at the time. We were in the process of  
22 developing the request for proposals and getting --  
23 getting it out for bid.

24 As you are aware, Section 427.704(3) of  
25 Florida Statutes requires the Commission to select

1 the provider for telecommunications relay service.

2 Sprint T-Mobile chose not to renew the current  
3 contract, which is in the first year of the  
4 optional four-year period. So, the current  
5 agreement will expire on April 28th, 2022.

6 At the May 4th, 2021, agenda conference, the  
7 Commission issued a request for proposals for a new  
8 contract beginning March 1st, 2022. In response,  
9 Hamilton Relay and Sprint T-Mobile filed proposals.

10 At the October 12th, 2021, Commission agenda  
11 conference, the Commission approved staff's  
12 recommendation to select Sprint T-Mobile's proposal  
13 based on staff's evaluation of technical,  
14 financial, and price elements of the proposals.

15 Both proposals were fairly equal in terms of  
16 the -- the technical aspects of the proposals,  
17 based on the evaluations by our evaluation  
18 committee. I think the major difference was in  
19 the -- the price elements, which Sprint T-Mobile  
20 offered a lower price and, ultimately, a lower cost  
21 to Florida Relay Service.

22 The Commission is currently working with  
23 Sprint T-Mobile to finalize contract details and --  
24 and once that's put in place again, we will look to  
25 have the new contract, which will be, at this time,

1 Sprint T-Mobile, again, but the new contract with  
2 the new rates and the -- the new service offerings  
3 beginning March 1st, 2022.

4 I will be happy to address any questions at  
5 this time.

6 Hearing none, we will now proceed with Florida  
7 Telecommunications Relay's annual report  
8 presentation.

9 Mr. Bascom, do you want to go ahead and get  
10 started now?

11 MR. BASCOM: Thank you, Curtis. This is Brett  
12 Bascom, business manager at Florida  
13 Telecommunications Relay.

14 I think everybody has a copy of the 2021  
15 annual report that was sent out in the packet that  
16 was notifying this meeting and -- but there are  
17 several items that -- that I want to point out.

18 And one is going back to your presentation,  
19 Curtis. I just wanted to make a note that the new  
20 TRS Relay contract should impact FTRI's budget that  
21 was approved by the Florida Public Service  
22 Commission.

23 And that impact to the budget with these new  
24 rates -- that will be from March until June in our  
25 budget cycle -- will impact our budget \$90,000

1           approximately. And I just wanted to make sure  
2           everybody was aware of that. So, it's -- it's not  
3           a huge amount, but I wanted to make sure everybody  
4           had that information going forward.

5           A couple other items that I wanted to point  
6           out. You know, obviously, we're still dealing with  
7           COVID in the world. And that -- that limits FTRI's  
8           distribution activity, but I also wanted to, you  
9           know, point out that FTRI has, you know, a couple  
10          of items that the Public Service Commission had  
11          asked us to look at; one of those being the RDC  
12          break-even analysis that they ordered in the budget  
13          recommendation and approval process for FTRI's  
14          2021-2022 budget.

15          And we had sent out a survey asking for  
16          information from the regional distribution centers.  
17          And we sent it out once and got about five replies,  
18          I believe. And we got an additional reply the  
19          second time we sent it out; the -- the total being  
20          six responses, as of this morning. And two of them  
21          were CILs and the rest are -- are various deaf  
22          service centers and whatnot.

23          And so, we're -- we're still looking to get  
24          more information from the regional distribution  
25          centers to comply with that analysis.

1           The other item was the Public Service  
2           Commission had asked us to look at a chat type of  
3           function for our website. And we have been working  
4           with an organization -- they're a company in town  
5           called BowStearn that does marketing and several  
6           types of things like that.

7           And they came back with a proposal to us just  
8           recently. And that proposal will be, you know,  
9           given to our executive director when he -- when he  
10          gets here in the office. And we can review that  
11          with him.

12          The initial proposal was about \$6,254 to get  
13          that started. And we'll have to analyze that a  
14          little bit further. We haven't had the proposal  
15          long enough to determine other variables that might  
16          go along with it. They offered some (background  
17          noise) at \$150 an hour, if we ever needed future  
18          support on it or training or anything like that.

19          So, we're looking at those numbers and we'll  
20          provide that in more detail as we move forward  
21          through the budget process, which will probably be  
22          starting in the next month or so.

23          And that is -- that's pretty much it from me,  
24          unless anybody has any questions.

25          MR. WILLIAMS: Are there any questions for

1 Mr. Bascom and FTRI?

2 MR. McCABE: Hey, Curtis, Tom McCabe. I just  
3 joined. I'm sorry about --

4 MS. HAGNER: I --

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Well, Tom, thank you.

6 MS. HAGNER: I have a question.

7 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes. What's your name, please?

8 MS. HAGNER: My name is Debbe --

9 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

10 MS. HAGNER: -- Hagner.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay, Debbe.

12 MS. HAGNER: I was just wondering, are they  
13 planning to upgrade the different equipment with --  
14 for the FTRI, like cell phones or something?

15 MR. BASCOM: That question probably needs to  
16 go to either our -- or the executive director,  
17 Public Service Commission. I'm not -- I'm not  
18 aware of anything at the moment.

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Debbe, this is Curtis Williams.  
20 Are -- are you -- is that question related to the  
21 new Sprint T-Mobile contract?

22 MS. HAGNER: No. I'm looking at the FTRI  
23 equipment.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay.

25 MS. HAGNER: Maybe I'm looking at the wrong

1           PowerPoint.

2           MR. WILLIAMS: No, they're -- the -- the  
3           equipment that -- that -- and -- and, Brett, you  
4           can jump in if I miss the point, but the -- the  
5           equipment that is presented in Florida  
6           Telecommunications Relay's annual report is the  
7           same equipment that was distributed last year. I  
8           don't believe that there are -- there's any new  
9           equipment that has been added.

10          MR. BASCOM: This is -- this is Brett Bascom.  
11          That's correct.

12          MR. McCABE: This is Tom McCabe with the FTRI.  
13          I'm a -- I'm the board president.

14          The Florida Statutes does not provide the  
15          authority to distribute wireless phones. And so,  
16          that has been an issue that --

17          MS. HAGNER: But what --

18          MR. McCABE: It's been an issue that we're  
19          trying to figure out. And it might require some --

20          MS. HAGNER: So, this is Debbe, again.

21          MR. McCABE: Okay.

22          MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Debbe, go ahead.

23          MS. HAGNER: So, what would it take to send  
24          to the -- for the legislature [sic]?

25          MR. McCABE: It will probably take a

1 legislative change to the current statute.

2 MR. BRADLEY: Yes, that's right.

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Who just spoke, please?

4 MR. BRADLEY: That was Cecil Bradley.

5 MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Thank you.

6 And, again, let me remind everyone, before you  
7 speak, please state your name. It's for the  
8 benefit of the court reporter that we have here for  
9 the -- the transcript so we will be able to  
10 identify the conversation with the individual.  
11 Thank you.

12 Are there any additional questions?

13 MS. PEREZ: Yes, this is Tracy, again, with  
14 the Center for Hearing and Communication.

15 In regards to the FTRI survey, if I did not  
16 receive that, is there a way we can get that sent  
17 again?

18 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom with Florida  
19 Telecommunications Relay. Yes, if you would  
20 forward me your e-mail to -- to my e-mail, which is  
21 b-b-a-s, like "Sam", c-, as in "Charlie", o-m, as  
22 in "Mary", @ftri.org, I will make sure you get a  
23 copy of that.

24 MS. PEREZ: Great. Thank you very much.

25 MR. BASCOM: No problem.

1 MS. HAGNER: This is Debbe, again.

2 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Debbe.

3 MS. HAGNER: Is it possible -- because the --  
4 because the -- the survey was done online. Is it  
5 possible to mail the survey and people mail it  
6 back? Maybe you might get a better response.

7 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett. I'm not sure if  
8 we would get a better response or not. I could  
9 offer that in a subsequent e-mail or contact to  
10 them. I can -- you know, I guess we could do that,  
11 if -- I mean, if that would be the direction of  
12 FTRI's management -- higher management, we could do  
13 that.

14 MS. DELGADO: This is Mariah from Deaf and  
15 Hearing Services.

16 Just a little FYI for Brett, when the survey  
17 went out, for some reason, it went to my spam. And  
18 I think, maybe because it had the survey attached,  
19 my e-mail saw it as spam. So, like, I didn't see  
20 it until the second go-round. Maybe that's a  
21 problem other people are having.

22 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom.

23 Thank you for that information. When -- maybe  
24 we can also send out an e-mail to those who have  
25 not responded and just ask that question.

1 MS. JOHNSON: This is Jane Johnson.

2 I wanted to let you know also, Brett, that  
3 I've heard from the several of the centers for  
4 independent living that they never did receive the  
5 survey.

6 And then when you sent it yesterday, I believe  
7 from your personal e-mail address or your work  
8 e-mail, they did receive it. So, I think you -- it  
9 must have been sent by a commercial company. Or  
10 did you hire someone to do the s- -- like, a -- a  
11 survey company? I think it -- I think it was -- it  
12 came across, I think, into the spam filters as a  
13 marketing e-mail.

14 And so, most people -- I don't think any of  
15 the CILs got it the first time you sent it.

16 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom.

17 I had two CILs respond, but yeah, we could --  
18 it didn't come from my personal e-mail. It came  
19 from Survey Monkey, I believe, but we can -- we can  
20 look into that and recontact everybody. That's not  
21 a problem.

22 MS. JOHNSON: This is Jane, again.

23 So, does that mean that there is no break-even  
24 analysis for this meeting?

25 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom.

1 I was not instructed by the Public Service  
2 Commission to provide a break-even analysis for  
3 this meeting. The break-even analysis was in an  
4 order and it was to be provided with our next  
5 budget submission.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, this is Curtis Williams.

7 That -- that is correct, Jane. During our  
8 last budget agenda conference, the Commission did  
9 issue an order. And we -- the Commission ordered  
10 FTRI to provide that analysis at the next budget  
11 agenda conference.

12 We did -- we did ask for or request an update  
13 on the process. And so, that's the purpose here is  
14 just to find out where we are and how -- how that  
15 directive is being carried out at this point.

16 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you.

17 MR. WILLIAMS: Are there any additional  
18 questions for Mr. Bascom, with FTRI, regarding  
19 FTRI's annual report?

20 I do have -- Brett, I -- I have one question.  
21 I want to go back to your -- your point on the new  
22 contract and the impact on FTRI's budget. You  
23 stated that it's -- and I understand this is an  
24 estimate -- that your estimate is that it may have  
25 approximately a \$90,000 impact from March to -- to

1 June. And it's my understanding that you're basing  
2 that on the increase in the rates for relay service  
3 and caption telephone service.

4 Can you provide some clarity on your -- you  
5 know, the -- the impact on FTRI's budget will be  
6 based on the rates and the projected minutes of  
7 use. So, what -- what estimate are you using and  
8 what source are you using for the projected minutes  
9 of use at this point?

10 MR. BASCOM: Thanks, Curtis. This is Brett  
11 Bascom.

12 Yes, that's correct, Curtis. I just took the  
13 projection that Sprint had sent me when it did the  
14 budget and applied the new rates to those minutes  
15 that were projected for the months of March through  
16 June and let the spreadsheet recalculate the total,  
17 and the difference was \$90,000 increase.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: But you will -- you will  
19 receive a new -- an updated minutes-of-use  
20 projection for the budget year 2022-'23, which  
21 is -- is what your next filing will be.

22 But I -- I understand what you're saying.  
23 You're saying that this is -- you're looking at the  
24 current budget period from March to June. And  
25 that's the -- the current 2021-2022 budget year

1           that you're -- you're basing that on?

2           MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom.

3           Yes, that's correct, Curtis.

4           MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. Okay.

5           MR. BASCOM: Just for this particular budget  
6           year, '21 to '22.

7           MR. WILLIAMS: Okay. We're -- and that will  
8           be late -- okay. I understand. Thank you for  
9           that -- for that clarification.

10           Are there any additional questions for  
11           Mr. Bascom? If not, we will have Sprint T-Mobile's  
12           presentation at this time.

13           Jeff?

14           MR. BRANCH: Yes. Good afternoon and hello,  
15           everyone. This is Jeff Branch speaking. Hello.  
16           And nice to -- I guess I can't see you, so I can't  
17           say nice to see you, but it's nice to participate  
18           in the meeting today and get to hear everyone's  
19           comments.

20           I hope that everyone is having an excellent  
21           year so far. I know there have been so many  
22           challenges with COVID still continuing to happen.  
23           There have been some changes that are also  
24           happening out there in the world right now as far  
25           as vaccination, information about that, and more

1 and more businesses, now, are allowing their  
2 employees to go back to the offices to work.

3 People, now, are able to go to public meetings  
4 again and one-on-one sessions and group sessions,  
5 with people getting together as long as they are  
6 following, obviously, you know, some health  
7 protocols, just making sure that everyone remains  
8 safe; obviously, masking and the like, keeping up  
9 social distancing, et cetera.

10 I -- as far as T-Mobile goes, T-Mobile is  
11 finally allowing us, now, to start traveling again.  
12 So, we are able to go now, if we get approval, to  
13 different events of travel to do that. I was able,  
14 now -- because of the changes, I can go to these  
15 events and meet with these people in-person.

16 I recently went to an event in Florida. It  
17 was an IT and deaf event that was happening in  
18 Lakeland. There were about 400 people in  
19 attendance at that one and there were around 50  
20 different vendors that were set up.

21 It was so nice, so good to be able to see  
22 people there in-person again and to see everyone  
23 mingling around; just the energy of all of those  
24 people, people you haven't seen in such a long  
25 because of the pandemic.

1           And the nice thing about getting together is  
2           seeing how people are doing again, getting a sense  
3           of their organizations and how they're surviving,  
4           talking about current issues, just kind of getting  
5           a readout on everyone and just getting the buzz,  
6           right: What is everybody doing, how are they doing  
7           and how can we help one another, how can we better  
8           supp- -- be better supportive of each other and all  
9           of the events that are happening for the rest of  
10          the year.

11          That being said, I'm very optimistic. It  
12          seems like so many good things are happening.  
13          Businesses are back. People are back in the  
14          offices. Small businesses are growing now, working  
15          through a lot of these issues that we've seen these  
16          last couple of years. So, all of these things are  
17          very good for the deaf and hard-of-hearing  
18          community.

19          Now, as far as my PowerPoint goes, this is the  
20          same agenda that I will be speaking through. So,  
21          first I'll talk about Florida Relay conference  
22          captioning and also some specifics on that so you  
23          have some numbers of the TRS actuals. And then we  
24          will talk about a quality report, so I'll run  
25          through that. And then I'll do an outreach-expense

1 report.

2 For RCC --

3 MR. WILLIAMS: Excuse me. Excuse me. Excuse  
4 me, Jeff. This is Curtis Williams.

5 MR. BRANCH: Uh-huh.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Just want to interrupt for  
7 just -- just a moment. We are getting some  
8 background noise. I'm not sure if someone has some  
9 background noise in the room or if you're on a --  
10 on a -- on a cell phone, but it is causing a little  
11 distraction to our court reporter.

12 So, I'll please remind everyone to -- if  
13 you're not speaking, to mute your phone. And that  
14 will help with the quality of our meeting as we  
15 move forward.

16 Excuse me for interrupting, Jeff. You can  
17 continue.

18 MR. BRANCH: And this is Jeff. No problem,  
19 Curtis. No problem at all. All right. So, feel  
20 free to interrupt, if there's something else you  
21 need to add or interject or, if there's too much  
22 background noise on the audio, please just let me  
23 know.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Will do. Thank you.

25 MR. BRANCH: All right. So, I'll identify

1           myself again. This is Jeff speaking, for the CART  
2           [sic] reporter.

3           The first thing I'll talk about is RCC and the  
4           minutes of usage with that. If you're looking at  
5           my PowerPoint, we're comparing this year to last.  
6           And, as you'll see, there is a big difference in  
7           those statistics and the amount of usage of RCC.

8           Obviously, last year was when the pandemic  
9           started and, at that time, people were forced to,  
10          all of a sudden, work from home. And when they are  
11          working from home, they were using the RCC service  
12          more.

13          RCC is Relay Conference Captioning; so,  
14          providing captions to allow people to read captions  
15          of what's being said via text while a meeting is  
16          taking place. So, the user is reading what's being  
17          said. They have some residual hearing, maybe a  
18          hard-of-hearing person. They may also be listening  
19          in to what's being said on the phone, but then, any  
20          words that are missed, they can read on the  
21          captioning that's being produced on the screen.  
22          So, that's RCC. That's what the service is and  
23          what it does.

24          People working from home were still having to  
25          attend meetings. Perhaps interpreters were not

1 available for some of those. So, these are  
2 meetings where people are typically in the  
3 conference room, but because of the pandemic, they  
4 couldn't be.

5 Maybe these users, when they were in a  
6 conference room, had an interpreter or could read  
7 lips of people speaking, but now that people were  
8 working independently, they couldn't do that  
9 anymore from home. People are going back to the  
10 offices now, so you are seeing those RCC minutes  
11 drop.

12 This is not a service we market because we do  
13 have a cap or a limit on RCC usage. So, we need to  
14 be very cautious about who's using this service and  
15 just make sure it's being utilized appropriately.

16 On my next slide, you'll see it says "Florida  
17 RCC Minutes, Usage to Date". So, this shows usage  
18 that has already occurred month by month. You can  
19 see that accumulation. As of August, we have 1,380  
20 minutes, as you'll see here. So, there's a total  
21 of 30,000, of which 1,380 have been utilized. So,  
22 that is what that slide indicates.

23 On the next slide, we are looking at billable  
24 TRS minutes. This slide shows a comparison, this  
25 year to last. Looking at this, you can see how we

1 compare to 2020. And, again, the time period shown  
2 here is March through August, so starting with the  
3 fiscal year and ending in August.

4 You can see we're pretty much on par in March.  
5 And then, as the months go on, you see a bit of  
6 decline in usage -- not a lot; as expected. So,  
7 again, this chart just shows you how those minutes  
8 are being years -- used. And over the years, in  
9 general, TRS use- -- usage has declined.

10 CapTel -- you'll see the same thing. Those  
11 minutes are also declining over the years. I've  
12 said this before: New technology is always  
13 emerging. More and more people are using wireless  
14 devices, IT-based services, so they are  
15 transitioning over to internet protocol equipment,  
16 IP-based equipment. For many people, that's much  
17 easier to use. So, that's the rationale for these  
18 minutes going down. And, again, this is nothing  
19 out -- that surprises us. This is expected.

20 At T-Mobile Accessibility, our responsibility  
21 is to continue to support the current equipment  
22 users; so, people who still have landlines and are  
23 using the services that we provide, we want to  
24 continue to support that. We need to make sure  
25 that these people have the services that they need.

1           If you look at the next slide, this talks  
2           about Florida French session minutes. And, again,  
3           this one is just showing you what those numbers  
4           look like. So, you can see the number of minutes  
5           of usage for French services. And, as you see,  
6           it's very small. That was not utilized a whole  
7           lot.

8           On this next slide, we see Florida Spanish-to-  
9           English session minutes. This graph is showing us  
10          the minutes of usage and it's a similar pattern to  
11          what we looked at on that previous slide with TRS  
12          in general. So, TRS session minutes, like we  
13          talked about, are declining a little bit. These  
14          Spanish-to-English minutes are doing the same.

15          This next slide is billable STS, or speech-to-  
16          speech, minutes. This slide is showing those  
17          speech-to-speech specifics. And we do have several  
18          users throughout Florida that are utilizing our  
19          speech-to-speech service.

20          In fact, I have reached out to one person that  
21          uses a lot of speech-to-speech service and they've  
22          given us some feedback. And we are continuing to  
23          work with that individual who has reached out to us  
24          on the feedback they've provided.

25          It's very helpful to get actual feedback from

1 users. This allows us to understand their needs  
2 and hopefully meet the requests that they're  
3 making.

4 The next slide that we're looking at is the  
5 CapTel minutes; so, intrastate CapTel minutes.  
6 This shows those minutes of usage. And again, it's  
7 comparing last year to this. And you're -- you're  
8 seeing that downward trajectory on this one, too.  
9 We'll see that annually, now.

10 I mentioned earlier that IP equipment, like IP  
11 CapTel, is a big thing here in Florida. So, people  
12 are using those newer types of equipment that's  
13 internet-based. They're moving to Wi-Fi  
14 connections, internet-based connections, et cetera.  
15 So, again, it's just newer technology that people  
16 are migrating to. And we'll continue to see more  
17 and more of that as time goes on.

18 The next slide is showing us the TRS Florida  
19 quality report. As you know, we are always  
20 monitoring things. We're looking at our service  
21 level and that is something that's required by the  
22 state. So, we're continually doing that. We  
23 monitor that service level to make sure that we're  
24 complying and that we're keeping up with our  
25 quality.

1           We had some test calls for quality reporting.  
2           Those are suspended for the time being. The reason  
3           for that suspension is, because of the pandemic, a  
4           lot of the centers and the center managers are also  
5           trying to take calls, so if, people are off sick  
6           because of COVID, management is processing calls.

7           If a center has to close for a deep clean or  
8           whatever the rationale may be, then those quality-  
9           assurance calls aren't taking place so that  
10          everyone can be fully focused on the citizens who  
11          are calling and placing calls.

12          We have been more consistent lately and we  
13          have less and less people calling in sick. Agents  
14          are back to work now. Some are vaccinated, and  
15          things like that are helping. So, we are making  
16          progress in this regard.

17          I do anticipate those test calls will be  
18          resumed very soon. Once again, I think things are  
19          just moving back to normal and that will include  
20          test calls in the not-so-distant future.

21          The next slide is CapTel Florida Quality  
22          Report. Again, that's the same thing here, same as  
23          TRS.

24          Any complaints we receive, we respond to  
25          accordingly. We contact customers to make sure

1           that they are getting their needs met.

2           For the outreach-expense report, as I  
3           mentioned earlier, I finally had the opportunity to  
4           get back on the road and do things. I can do  
5           sponsorships, I can go to events now, et cetera.  
6           So, I'm really looking forward to doing more of  
7           that. That just resumed a month or two ago, and  
8           so, things are picking up in that area right now.

9           One thing that I did as far as the outreach  
10          section, I created a PSA video. The PSA is for  
11          speech-to-speech, and it's a commercial or public  
12          service announcement, PSA, that will be running in  
13          the Gainesville area.

14          I feel that Gainesville is the right place to  
15          start. We'll run that from time to time in other  
16          areas as well. Obviously, there are budgetary  
17          limitations, but I want that spot to run and I  
18          think Gainesville is a good starting point for  
19          that. Gainesville has a very large community, so I  
20          think it's good to reach them. And also there are  
21          several universities in that area.

22          So, again, that's a speech-to-speech PSA. And  
23          we ran 345 spots in that. That started  
24          October 11th and ran until October 25th. So, it  
25          just finished. And I'm planning to do another run

1 after the holiday season.

2 November and December -- so many people are  
3 just kind of focused on the holidays and distracted  
4 with everything that's going on. So, I don't think  
5 people really pay attention to the television  
6 during those two months. Everybody is also really  
7 stressed with time and a budget during those  
8 months.

9 So, once those holidays die down, January and  
10 February, and things get back to normal --  
11 everybody has spent what they wanted to spend in  
12 November and December, so I think they come back to  
13 the couch and watch TV in January and February.  
14 So, we will run some spots again during those two  
15 months.

16 We are also sponsoring something called the  
17 Deaf Literacy Center. And they are running  
18 something called the Deaf-initely Arts Showcase.  
19 So, we're sponsoring that, Deaf-initely Arts  
20 Showcase. I think it's a cool name. What it is is  
21 children, who are deaf or hard-of hearing, having  
22 an art showcase. So, this is all at the library in  
23 Safety Harbor.

24 So, all of this artwork will be showcased and  
25 many, many parents will come to see it. A lot of

1 adults will be at that library, at that event, as  
2 well. So, I think this is a good opportunity to do  
3 some PR for our 711 Relay services. We can explain  
4 to the parents about the services that the state of  
5 Florida provides and how their children can utilize  
6 those services.

7 When those kids are a little bigger, maybe  
8 they can start using telephones. And this will  
9 just give the parents an opportunity to learn about  
10 relay services. We'll educate them so they know  
11 that these services are available for their  
12 children. And also, perhaps some of their parents  
13 are hard-of-hearing as well. So, that is something  
14 I'm working on.

15 And, again, there will be more added to that  
16 outreach as time goes on now that outreach has  
17 opened up again.

18 All right. That's it for my report. That's  
19 the end of my presentation. I'll pass the floor  
20 back over to Curtis.

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you.

22 MR. IMIG: You're on mute.

23 MR. WILLIAMS: Are there any --

24 MR. IMIG: You're on mute.

25 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Jeff. Great

1 presentation. Very detailed. We -- we appreciate  
2 it.

3 Are there any questions?

4 MS. HAGNER: This is Debbe. I have a  
5 question.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Debbe. Go ahead.

7 MS. HAGNER: What is the cap that you  
8 mentioned?

9 MR. BRANCH: Jeff speaking.

10 Yes. Hi, Debbe. Relay conference captioning,  
11 which we call RCC, has a cap. And that cap is  
12 30,000 minutes of usage.

13 MS. HAGNER: Okay. Thank you.

14 MR. BRANCH: Uh-huh. Certainly. You are very  
15 welcome.

16 MR. WILLIAMS: Are there any additional  
17 questions for Mr. Branch, Sprint T-Mobile?

18 Okay. At this time, we will have the  
19 presentation by the Florida Association of Centers  
20 for Independent Living. Ms. Johnson.

21 MS. JOHNSON: Thank you, Curtis.

22 And, hi, my name is Jane Johnson. And I am  
23 the executive director for the State Association of  
24 Centers for Independent Living. And Centers for  
25 Independent Living are federally-funded non-profit

1 organizations that serve all disabilities and all  
2 ages.

3 And, by law, a majority of their employees  
4 must be people with disabilities, themselves; and a  
5 majority of their governing boards must also be  
6 people with disabilities themselves. And the  
7 intent behind that is to ensure that they are  
8 providing authentic peer-based assistance and  
9 services to help people with disabilities live  
10 independently as possible in their communities.

11 And as part of that work -- towards that  
12 mission, they have partnered in the past and  
13 currently partner with FTRI to be regional  
14 distribution centers for the equipment services  
15 program. And their involvement with FTRI predates  
16 my tenure here at the association by many years. I  
17 know some of them have been working as long --  
18 almost up to 15 years with FTRI.

19 So, thankful to Curtis for giving me the  
20 opportunity to sort of weigh in with the  
21 perspective because we've been working -- when I  
22 came on board with the association back in 2019, I  
23 was immediately approached by James Forstall, and  
24 he shared some concerns that have been already  
25 mentioned on this call about FTRI's inability to

1 use more-modern technology to serve their  
2 customers. And he recognized a need for statutory  
3 change that he, apparently, had started back in  
4 2012, but had not gotten anywhere.

5 So, these issues that I want to address  
6 today -- or some of the perspective I want to  
7 address today -- aren't new and they were generated  
8 from my very first conversations with FTRI. And we  
9 have been working very diligently with -- with the  
10 leadership there.

11 When Mr. Forstall left FTRI, we worked very  
12 closely with Sean Bankston. He came to several of  
13 our board meetings. We worked, in good faith,  
14 trying to come up with a better way to structure  
15 the regional distribution center contracts because  
16 they were -- our centers were actually losing money  
17 on them and we were having to subsidize the work  
18 that they were doing with other program funds.

19 Centers for independent living are federally  
20 funded, but they're not well-funded. They all --  
21 their budgets are not huge and they operate a tight  
22 margin. So, the situation was -- was a challenge  
23 to maintain the contract with FTRI.

24 When Mr. Bankston left, we -- I reached out to  
25 Martin Keller, the third executive director, and

1 had some conversations with him via e-mail, and was  
2 under the impression that he was very anxious to  
3 work with us to try to take a look at those  
4 contracts. And then I -- unfortunately he -- he  
5 left FTRI. So, I have not yet had -- had any  
6 conversations with Mr. Bradley, but I look forward  
7 to meeting him and wish him the very best.

8 But, in the meantime, though, it -- this --  
9 that -- those -- you know, the three years of  
10 trying unsuccessfully to kind of move the ball  
11 forward forces a use and examination of where we  
12 are and why we are where we are with this program  
13 and with disability programs, in general, in  
14 Florida.

15 And so, I have a PowerPoint that was -- that  
16 was part of Curtis' attachment. And I don't know  
17 if everyone has a copy of it, but I'm going to talk  
18 through it. And I'll describe what's on the  
19 PowerPoint slides. And I'll go quickly, out of  
20 respect for everyone's time, but on the title  
21 slide, it says "Telecommunications Act of Florida".  
22 And the subtitle is "Integrating Statewide Systems  
23 to Improve Outcomes and Efficiency".

24 And that really is a theme of my presentation.  
25 I want to talk about integrating the existing

1 statewide systems, leveraging existing systems and  
2 other funding sources so that we can get better  
3 outcomes for the people we're all trying to serve  
4 and do it in the most efficiently -- efficient way  
5 possible.

6 The second slide is a time line of relevant  
7 public policy around disability services and  
8 federally-funded infrastructure for the state.

9 So, in 1973, Title VII of the Rehabilitation  
10 Act was passed and it established Centers for  
11 Independent Living with the idea that they would  
12 provide local tools, resources, and support to  
13 allow -- help people with disabilities fully  
14 integrate into their community and live as  
15 independently as possible.

16 15 years later, Congress passed the Technology  
17 Related Assistance Act, which provided financial  
18 assistance to states to start -- to conduct  
19 assessments, to identify what kind of consumer  
20 responses programs were needed to help people with  
21 disabilities be able to access the technology that  
22 was available, allow them to live more  
23 independently, and have better access to programs  
24 and services.

25 Three years later, Florida passed a state

1 statute to comply with Title IV of the ADA. And  
2 that created the Florida Telecommunications Relay,  
3 or the -- the mandate for -- a -- a charge -- they  
4 charged the Public Service Commission with the  
5 responsibility for creating and overseeing a  
6 statewide telecommunications network for  
7 individuals who are deaf/hard-of-hearing, deaf,  
8 blind, or speech-impaired. And so, I know that the  
9 folks on this committee -- or on this call are  
10 becoming more familiar with that, the  
11 Telecommunica- -- Telecommunications Act, the  
12 Assistance Act, of 1991.

13 In 1994, the Assistive Technology Act that  
14 Congress initially passed was updated to provide  
15 financial assistance to states to support systems  
16 change and advocacy efforts.

17 In 1998, the Assistive Technology -- another  
18 Assistive Technology Act was passed by Congress to  
19 create a statewide -- a permanent comprehensive  
20 statewide program of technology-related assistance  
21 for individuals with disabilities of all ages.

22 This is relevant to the -- to TASA, in  
23 Florida, because it's glaring that it's -- it  
24 focuses on making technology available and  
25 delivering technology to make services more

1 available, but this was general. This was all  
2 disabilities and all ages.

3 There were additional amendments to the ATF in  
4 1998 and 2004, but I think the underlying message  
5 is that Congress recognized that this work was  
6 important. It was spe- -- it was effective. The  
7 specific technology programs were showing that they  
8 are were actually having an impact in each state at  
9 the local levels for consumers. They were making  
10 technology available. They funded -- led device-  
11 lending programs and loan programs to help finance  
12 the purchase of assistive technology.

13 So, this is all really positive and exciting  
14 because states -- the federal government, Congress,  
15 and states were embracing assistive technology and  
16 programs and services that made sure there was  
17 equal access for people.

18 Additional federal legislation was passed in  
19 the 21st century, Communications and Video  
20 Accessibility Act, to ensure that people with  
21 disabilities had access to advanced communications  
22 like digital, broadband, and mobile products.

23 And that kind of speaks to -- the federal  
24 intent is that specific communications --  
25 telecommunications programs should not be limited

1 to landlines or certain types of phones, but they  
2 should be -- people with disabilities  
3 shouldn't be -- their options shouldn't be limited  
4 or confined. And I believe that the federal  
5 message was pretty clear in all of this legislation  
6 that has passed over the years.

7 Two years after this 21st Century  
8 Communication and Video Accessibility Act passed,  
9 the No Wrong Door model was adopted by the  
10 administration on commun- -- community living.

11 This was a health and human services agencies,  
12 but it -- the model that they were proposing and  
13 pushing out the space was that, for people with  
14 disabilities, they should be seamlessly connected  
15 to a full range of community-based options and it  
16 should be -- it shouldn't -- they shouldn't have to  
17 go to multiple places to get their needs met. They  
18 should be able to go to one place, a single  
19 place -- as few places as possible to get a full  
20 range of options and get a full range and access to  
21 services.

22 Two years later, the Workforce Innovation and  
23 Opportunity Act further codified the commitment to  
24 that model by transferring assistive technology  
25 proposals and centers for independent living out of

1 the Department of Education and the Division of  
2 Rehabilitation, where they had been, into the  
3 Administration on Community Living.

4 And there was a recognition that there are  
5 social determinants of health that are not medical  
6 in nature, but they do impact peoples' quality of  
7 life and peoples' ability to live independently.

8 So, the assistive technology programs and the  
9 Center- -- Centers for Independent Living were sort  
10 of married together under this administration for  
11 community living whose vision was that everyone  
12 should be able to live in their community as  
13 independently as possible. It was a -- sort of a  
14 reaction to institute -- institutionalization that  
15 had been forced on some people because of the lack  
16 of options in their communities.

17 So, the next slide talks about the current  
18 situation in Florida with the Florida  
19 Telecommunications Relay, which continues to  
20 operate as a separate system outside of the -- the  
21 general disability programs in Florida and -- but  
22 with whom the Centers for Independent Living, most  
23 of them, at least, have been partnered with for  
24 many years.

25 However, the -- as I mentioned earlier, and

1 the reason for our initial contact with FTRI, was  
2 that the model that they -- was being offered by  
3 FTRI to the regional distribution center was really  
4 difficult to -- to work -- to manage because it was  
5 a fee-for-service model that did not pay for any  
6 capacity and, for some centers, it was very  
7 risk-based. They would invest in time and staff,  
8 travel, outreach, and then ask to be reimbursed for  
9 those services. In some cases, they'd be reim- --  
10 reimbursed for some -- in not all cases, they --  
11 they would be reimbursed.

12 And also, they would find that they worked  
13 with consumers in their centers and then, when a  
14 consumer decided to -- on a piece of equipment that  
15 they would want, if -- if FTRI delivered the  
16 equipment or sent -- mailed the equipment to the  
17 consumer directly, then, the CIL would not get  
18 credit for that transaction, in some cases. So,  
19 they would not get any reimbursement for their  
20 work.

21 So, FTRI, I will say, was very responsive to  
22 our concerns. They -- as I said, we've been  
23 working diligently with them through three  
24 executive directors, for several years, but we have  
25 not been able to get anywhere, which is why we kind

1 of did this soul-searching and wanted to step back  
2 and take a 30,000-foot view of -- with the  
3 situation in Florida when it comes -- as it relates  
4 to disability services in general, not just looking  
5 at FTRI.

6 The other concern that we have -- and the next  
7 slide that I have here is a graph that shows the --  
8 between 2008 and 2020, the equipment-distribution  
9 numbers. Where -- and in 2008, it starts out at  
10 just under 40,000. It reaches a peak at just under  
11 50,000 in 2011. And then, every year since then,  
12 the numbers go down quite significantly from just  
13 under 50,000 to just under 10,000 in 2020.

14 So, the -- those -- that drop in numbers is  
15 concerning. And we know that a lot of it has to do  
16 with the technology that FTRI is able to work with,  
17 but it also tells me that -- or makes us wonder  
18 where are people getting served and are they  
19 get- -- are they getting their numbers -- their  
20 needs met and is there a better way to look at this  
21 service more globally, outside of the -- just the  
22 realm of FTRI and maybe look more -- more  
23 expansively at what other programs -- what other  
24 infrastructure is -- do we have here in Florida and  
25 what has the federal government created and funded

1           that we might be able to leverage and take  
2           advantage of so that we can meet the needs of the  
3           people who need this kind of service more  
4           effectively and more broadly and not just meet  
5           their telephone needs, but other needs as well.

6           The slide -- the next slide is just a list of  
7           the types of equipment that have been distributed  
8           be- -- and it's a comparison of 2018 to 2019 or --  
9           with 2019 and 2020. So, the volume-control  
10          telephone distribution has gone from 15,503 units  
11          to 9,168 units in just a year.

12          The audible ring sig- -- ring signaler and  
13          individual ring signalers have gone from 256 units  
14          to 117. The caption telephone have gone from 160  
15          to 90.

16          So, I won't go through all of them, but the --  
17          the total distribution of units has gone, from  
18          2018-'19, to 16,111 units to 9,584 units,  
19          distributed in 2019 and '20. So, those numbers are  
20          concerning.

21          And it's not -- not an indictment on any -- on  
22          FTRI or anyone else. I think they -- when you talk  
23          about reading keys, I think we -- we can't see  
24          these numbers and not recognize or admit that -- or  
25          acknowledge that things are changing and we -- and

1           these delivery systems need -- should change with  
2           them.

3                   We shouldn't -- we can't -- I think we have a  
4           moral obligation to adapt to the changing  
5           circumstances to re- -- to diminish demand and  
6           diminish service and do something to -- to make  
7           sure that we're using the tax dollars that are --  
8           that fund these programs responsibly and  
9           effectively.

10                   So, one idea that we have proposed that would  
11           be -- I will admit it's a big, hairy, audacious  
12           idea, but I think when you see numbers like I just  
13           described and when you see patterns that have gone  
14           on for years, I think you really -- we really all  
15           have to reckon with where we are and what our  
16           obligation is to the consumers that we're all paid  
17           to serve.

18                   And so, looking at what the state -- what the  
19           federal government has done with the creation of  
20           state-specific technology programs, we believe that  
21           the Florida Alliance for Assistive Services  
22           Technology, or FAAST, is the entity that has  
23           unparalleled experience and expertise in  
24           purchasing, maintaining, us- -- using and reusing  
25           assistive-technology equipment.

1           And we believe that they have leverage that  
2           they can use to significantly reduce the -- the  
3           overhead cost of operating a program like FTRI and  
4           increasing access to consumers. They have a  
5           consumer base already. They -- they have a network  
6           of regional demonstration centers throughout the  
7           state.

8           And then, as the federally-funded disability  
9           service providers that serve all 67 counties in  
10          Florida, we believe that the network of centers for  
11          independent living are uniquely equipped to deliver  
12          a cen- -- a decentralized consumer-centric service  
13          model that would be responsible to local needs,  
14          demographics, geography, and all disabilities  
15          because some, you know, people who are deaf and  
16          hard-of-hearing might -- might not -- that might  
17          not be their only disability.

18          And, as I mentioned, centers for independent  
19          living are run and governed by people with  
20          disabilities, themselves, and they are consumers  
21          responsive -- res- -- consumer -- responsible to  
22          their consumers, and consumer-driven.

23          I know that there are many deaf and hard-of-  
24          hearing centers that currently contract with FTRI.  
25          And we would not want to leave them out of the mix.

1           We see them as val- -- valuable partners. So,  
2           the -- our vision -- and right now, this is just a  
3           vision. It's not -- there's no formal proposal,  
4           but our vision would be that they would be  
5           incorporated into this decentralized statewide  
6           approach that serves all 67 counties.

7                   And then, of course, we would have to look at  
8           a -- a different business -- a different contract  
9           model that would actually in- -- incentivize the  
10          outcomes that I think we all want to see for the  
11          consumers that we serve.

12                   So, the next -- the last slide I have in this  
13          presentation is a map of Florida that shows the  
14          counties and then it shows the centers for  
15          independent living and the counties that each of  
16          them serve.

17                   And so, that's my proposal. And I want to put  
18          it in the -- in the bucket -- this is food for  
19          thought. This is something we've given a lot of --  
20          put a lot of time and effort into.

21                   As I said, for over ten years, the centers  
22          have been working on this and trying to negotiate  
23          with FTRI a better working relationship, but -- and  
24          also to produce better outcomes and because of the  
25          way the trends, the data are -- is reflecting, we

1 think that the time is now to think about doing  
2 something differently.

3 We -- we think that, again, we want to be good  
4 fiscal stewards of taxpayer dollars that fund this  
5 program. So, we -- we hope that this would be  
6 something that would at least stimulate a start of  
7 discussion about different ways of doing business  
8 to get better results.

9 And that's all I have. Thank you.

10 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Ms. Johnson. This  
11 is Curtis Williams. Thank you for -- for your  
12 presentation. That was very good and very  
13 enlightening.

14 I will point out that you raise some very good  
15 points. There are concerns that you presented that  
16 are -- that, as you indicated, have been presented  
17 before. There are concerns -- speaking on behalf  
18 of the Florida Public Service Commission, there  
19 are -- those are some concerns that we have. We  
20 are aware of them and we look forward to working  
21 with you, FTRI, and all the parties to address  
22 those issues.

23 So, at this time, are there any -- any  
24 questions for Ms. Johnson?

25 MR. HINTON: This is Cayce Hinton with

1 Commission staff. A couple of comments and then, I  
2 guess, one question.

3 First, Jane, you had mentioned taxpayer  
4 dollars that are being spent on this program. I  
5 just want to make sure that you're aware that FTRI  
6 and -- and Florida Relay is funded through a  
7 surcharge on wire-lined customer bills. That  
8 surcharge is set by the Commission. And that is  
9 what funds the -- FTRI and -- and relay system, not  
10 Florida tax dollars. It's not part of general  
11 revenue of the state. And it's not a -- a budget  
12 item that is set by the Legislature. It's  
13 something that the Commission establishes.

14 As such, we approve a budget for FTRI every  
15 year and -- and adjust that surcharge, as needed,  
16 if it's needed. And to -- I'll call it your  
17 vision, since it's not an official proposal, but  
18 your -- your vision, I gather, is to do away with  
19 FTRI and to move the Florida Relay administration  
20 to FFAST and the Centers for Independent Living.

21 Under that scenario, you -- you are aware that  
22 you would need to come to the Commission to have a  
23 budget approved on an annual basis and, since you  
24 are also federally-funded, we would probably have  
25 to send in auditors to make sure that the surcharge

1 revenue is not being used for other means than  
2 these centers. I just want to make sure you were  
3 aware of all that.

4 MS. JOHNSON: Yes. This is Jane Johnson.

5 And thank you for that. And so, I -- so,  
6 you -- yes, it is a surcharge. I guess, a  
7 surcharge, to me, is a tax because it's something  
8 that people are forced -- businesses are forced to  
9 pay -- or people with landlines. So, I apologize  
10 for saying it inartfully. So, I will call it a  
11 surcharge. They are consumer charges -- these are  
12 consumers' funds that are -- subsidize or -- or  
13 made this system available.

14 So, again, I think -- I know that I pay a  
15 charge on my phone bill for -- so -- and I consider  
16 that a tax because it doesn't -- it's not the  
17 service -- it's the -- whatever, but that's --  
18 that's not important. But staff and both -- staff  
19 is already required to be audited because it  
20 receives federal funds.

21 So, they -- and I didn't -- I don't want to  
22 say do away with FTRI. What I want to try to get  
23 people to think about was imagining a more  
24 expansive vision of the umbrella organization that  
25 would administer this program so that we could

1           leverage the other assistive technologies, services  
2           and devices and equipment and programs that are  
3           already being funded by the federal government,  
4           separate and apart from FTRI.

5           This was, again -- on the first slide, it's  
6           about integrating statewide systems to improve and  
7           outcomes and efficiencies. So, it wouldn't  
8           necessarily have to mean that you do away with  
9           FTRI, but you would envision a different way to  
10          administer this program by leveraging that larger  
11          program that the federal government or that, you  
12          know, Congress created and funds every year for --  
13          for a very similar -- not -- I mean, for similar  
14          purposes to provide access to assistive technology  
15          and services.

16          MR. HINTON: That's all I had, Curtis. Thank  
17          you.

18          MS. HAGNER: This is Deb- --

19          MR. WILLIAMS: All right. Thank you, Cayce.  
20          I think Debbe just weighed in?

21          MS. HAGNER: Yes. Yes. Just a dumb question:  
22          What is the difference between the FTRI versus the  
23          FAAST, one; and two, how many independent living  
24          centers are there in Florida and how many people  
25          are actually using that facility or service?

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Jane?

2 MS. JOHNSON: This is Jane Johnson.

3 And this -- Florida Alliance for Assistive  
4 Service and Technology was created by Congress.  
5 Every state has a program like -- like FFAST.  
6 It's a -- and I -- the FFAST -- the executive  
7 director is on the phone, so if I butcher what they  
8 are or what they do, I hope that she can correct  
9 me, but they are responsible for making sure that  
10 the state has a system to provide assistive  
11 technology devices, to educate people about  
12 assistive technology, to let -- allow people try  
13 them out, to borrow them, to understand, you know,  
14 what they -- what's available to them, to make --  
15 to help them live as independently as possible in  
16 their communities.

17 And so, while they don't distribute the FTRI  
18 phones, they can help people learn how to use their  
19 iPhones or, you know, their cell phones or other  
20 communication devices to be able to participate in  
21 telecommunications services despite a hearing  
22 impairment or a -- or disability.

23 And there are 15 centers for independent  
24 living and 17 locations throughout the state. And  
25 I don't have the statewide numbers on the number of

1 people they serve. I can get that to you because  
2 they -- they do break it down by the type of  
3 disability, but -- I don't know if that answered  
4 your question or not.

5 MS. HAGNER: Yes. Thank you.

6 MS. JOHNSON: You're welcome.

7 MS. GAUT: Hello, this is Kim Gaut.

8 I would like to address to Jane her numbers on  
9 distribution. You are aware that there's only less  
10 than 600,000 landlines left in the state of  
11 Florida, right, versus 22 million cell phones  
12 subscriptions? You know, not being allowed to  
13 distribute equipment more and -- and working with  
14 cell phone technology has hindered the distribution  
15 of equipment through FTRI for years.

16 What does the PSC plan on doing about any of  
17 that?

18 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes -- yes, this is Curtis  
19 Williams.

20 I think Mr. McCabe mentioned earlier -- and I  
21 would -- I would follow up on -- on his point in  
22 terms of the -- what is allowed in terms of  
23 equipment distribution through FTRI, which is -- is  
24 mainly centered around basic telecommunications  
25 service.

1           It's -- it's -- our position that there would  
2           need to be a statutory change to be able to  
3           distribute wireless technology and even to impose  
4           the surcharge on wireless or other  
5           telecommunications companies outside of what's  
6           currently being done on basic landlines.

7           MS. GAUT: This is Kim Gaut again.

8           MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Kim.

9           MS. GAUT: Still, the problem persists. You  
10          know, distribution is going to be limited to the  
11          equipment that works on landline services. Doesn't  
12          matter who controls the program. That's what's  
13          happening.

14          MR. WILLIAMS: That's a -- that's a very  
15          good -- very good point, Kim.

16          Charlie Murphy here with the Commission, our  
17          attorney, would want to weigh in now.

18          MR. MURPHY: Yeah, this is Charlie Murphy.

19          This entire program is set up and funded by  
20          customers of -- to be funded by customers of  
21          landlines. And it -- the vision of the program  
22          anticipated landlines.

23          And if -- if you're going to open it up,  
24          you've demonstrated -- you've said how few  
25          landlines there are. That funding source cannot

1 possibly supply telephones and -- and tablets  
2 and -- internet-based, you know, computer-type  
3 equipment for all those users.

4 So, if -- if you're going to address it -- and  
5 it looks like it does need to be addressed --  
6 you're gonna have to include the funding sources as  
7 well as the scope of the program altogether.

8 It's unworkable to think that a charge simply  
9 on landline users is going to fund a hugely-  
10 expanded program, but the point is well-taken and  
11 well-known that the limitation of basic landline  
12 service is not keeping up with available  
13 technology.

14 Thank you.

15 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Charlie.

16 This is Curtis Williams, again.

17 And just to echo, Kim, you -- you bring up a  
18 good point and to follow up on what Charlie said  
19 and what I stated earlier, and -- and that is  
20 whether it's -- it's FTRI providing service, the --  
21 the -- distributing the equipment under the current  
22 landline model or if it's a -- if it's FFAST or any  
23 other organization, the -- the limitations and the  
24 boundaries related to the types of equipment that  
25 can be distributed based on the current statutory

1 framework will still be there.

2 So, just -- you make a good point.

3 MS. JOHNSON: Curtis, this is Jane Johnson.

4 I would like to -- thank you, Kim. You really  
5 do make a good point. And I completely agree with  
6 you. I wasn't aware of the numbers that you  
7 quoted, but now I am, but that's sort of the reason  
8 why I think it's necessary to think differently  
9 about how we serve these consumers.

10 And if we can think about the people -- the  
11 end user first and not the system that -- systems  
12 that we operate in, there are, you know, people --  
13 fewer people are using the service because they are  
14 finding other options.

15 And, if that's the case, then we shouldn't --  
16 I think we -- we can acknowledge that and we do  
17 have a statewide assistive technology program that  
18 can make available multiple options to consumers so  
19 that they can get what's best for them, regardless  
20 of which program it's funded by.

21 So, that's why -- you know, in stepping back  
22 and trying to look at -- are we solving the wrong  
23 problems or are we -- are we really doing what's --  
24 what's in the best interest of the -- of the people  
25 that we're trying to serve, and I -- and that's

1           how, you know, we -- we believe that looking  
2           expansively at all -- you know, for the -- like,  
3           the federal government has built a system of  
4           highways, and we're not driving all of our cars on  
5           it.

6                     There's -- there's an assistive technology  
7           program. Why wouldn't we integrate this -- this  
8           program into that so that people who come for  
9           telecommunications access can consider either what  
10          FTRI's program can offer or the other options that  
11          FAAST would be able to talk to them about and help  
12          them try out and demonstrate so they get what's  
13          best for them.

14                    So, that's -- I wanted to make that comment  
15          because this is not -- we're trying to think about  
16          this in a completely different way that, at the end  
17          of the day, does a better job for consumers and is  
18          agnostic about which funding source and which --  
19          which program the service comes from.

20                    MR. WILLIAMS: Jane, this is Curtis --

21                    MS. TURNER: Hi, this is Amy -- excuse me.  
22                    This is Amy Turner from the Deaf and Hard-of-  
23                    Hearing Center in Fort Myers.

24                    I just wanted to let you know that you I am in  
25                    full agreement with Kim and that, understanding how

1           these phones are delivered -- yes, that is  
2           important. It's very important to take that into  
3           consideration when you have deaf and hard-of-  
4           hearing people that rely on centers like ours.

5           They rely on a compassionate delivery method  
6           that is used to give away this equipment. We have  
7           people that are trained, not just in -- in the use  
8           of the equipment, but in how to deal with people  
9           who are hard-of-hearing, how to deal with the  
10          elderly. We -- we teach them professionalism and  
11          how to be patient.

12          Those are all skills that I'm -- I'm not  
13          certain that -- that those skills are being taught  
14          in the end-user facilities that you're speaking of,  
15          but we are very -- you know, we take this to heart.  
16          This is a big deal right now, this program.

17          And we -- like I said, we go the extra mile in  
18          training our people to be compassionate, patient  
19          individuals, to walk them through and make sure  
20          that they know how to use their equipment. It's a  
21          lot more than just walking in and exchanging the  
22          phones.

23          And I -- I do hear what you're saying about  
24          the sustainability of the program, but it's  
25          something that, when you're talking about equal

1 access for all, you know, as a society, that has to  
2 play a part.

3 Thank you.

4 MS. DELGADO: Hi. This is Mariah Delgado from  
5 Deaf and Hearing Services.

6 And I understand what Jane is saying and, you  
7 know, you want to be good stewards of the, you  
8 know, consumers' money. You know, you want to  
9 reduce duplication. A lot of times efficiency and  
10 quality can be, you know, looked over when you --  
11 when you have so much duplication and that kind of  
12 thing. I understand all that.

13 But what I don't understand is the connection  
14 between CILs being the regional distribution  
15 network -- like, what -- I can understand maybe  
16 FTRI and FFAST, you know, joining together and  
17 selecting partners throughout the state, some of  
18 which could be CILs, some of which could be, you  
19 know, DHSs. I don't understand what -- what the  
20 connection is with CIL.

21 MS. JOHNSON: Curtis, if it's okay --

22 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

23 MS. JOHNSON: This is Jane Johnson.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Ms. Johnson, please.

25 MS. JOHNSON: I will respond to that.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes.

2 MS. JOHNSON: And, obviously, it sounds self-  
3 serving because it's coming from me, but honestly,  
4 you know, we looked -- we took a look back, I  
5 looked back in the history, I looked at the  
6 evolution of federal policy and funding for people  
7 with disabilities and -- which is why I kind of  
8 told the story leading up to -- at the beginning of  
9 the presentation, but the centers for independent  
10 living are the only federally-funded organizations  
11 that serve all 67 counties, that are run by people  
12 with disabilities.

13 To the -- Kim's earlier point that -- or  
14 actu- -- or who point -- whose point it was, but  
15 there are -- they do -- their employees are  
16 compassionate. They are people who are walking the  
17 walk. They understand the challenges that -- that  
18 people with disabilities can encounter when they're  
19 trying to access things.

20 So, they're run by people with disabilities.  
21 They're governed by people with disabilities. They  
22 are local. They are -- they are not facilities.  
23 They are -- and I don't know how to describe it.  
24 People think they're places where people live.  
25 It's not -- they are not residential facilities.

1           These are, you know, non-profit organizations.  
2           They have warehouses full of durable medical  
3           equipment and things that they give away; things  
4           like walkers, wheelchairs, shower chairs -- I'm  
5           trying to think of -- canes -- so, they -- they  
6           serve a whole -- a variety of different needs.

7           They -- they provide transition services to  
8           people moving from nursing homes and assisted  
9           living facilitates back into the community.

10          They also provide transition services for  
11          students with disabilities, in school. They are  
12          mandated now by -- the schools are mandated now, by  
13          law, to provide information to kids in schools  
14          about centers for independent living.

15          They -- they have federally-mandated activity  
16          that they must perform, but they -- because of the  
17          authenticity of the staff and the governing board,  
18          they are compassionate. They -- they are mission-  
19          driven. These are not -- these are not high-dollar  
20          organizations.

21          So, we looked at what infrastructure do we  
22          have that's already been paid for -- and I don't  
23          know that there is another network of disability  
24          service organizations that serve all ages --  
25          because they serve all seniors as well -- all ages

1 and disabilities, like CILs.

2 I know that the federal government certainly  
3 didn't create anything. They have area agencies on  
4 aging, but a lot of people with disabilities don't  
5 want to have to go to an area agency on aging if  
6 they're not a senior.

7 So, that's -- that -- that was the rationale.  
8 And I apologize if I -- I sound defensive because  
9 it really just was -- this was not coming -- this  
10 was not like a power grab, on our part. This was  
11 more just how could we -- how could we try to  
12 stimulate systems change that would actually result  
13 in a better service delivery model for consumers  
14 with disabilities and -- and this was -- this is an  
15 idea that came to us when we looked at -- you know,  
16 we've got all these assets on the table. And we're  
17 not taking full advantage of them all, and we're  
18 not using them to their full -- their full  
19 potential.

20 So, that's -- that's along a long-winded  
21 answer to your question.

22 MS. DELGADO: Okay. This is Mariah again.

23 I mean, I kind of -- I kind of understand the  
24 rationale, but I would -- I don't think the program  
25 could work without the CILs, for sure, but I also

1 don't think it would work without the DHSs.

2 Just -- and I'm a little self-serving because  
3 I'm with a -- you know, a DHS, but for instance,  
4 like, you know, where I'm -- where I am, in Lake  
5 and Sumter County, according to your map, the  
6 closest place is Alachua. I mean, that -- so, I  
7 don't see how -- I -- I -- and there may be other  
8 places besides DHSs and CILs, you know, that would  
9 do a good job as well.

10 I just don't know why, you know, we --  
11 there -- I could -- would -- would you be -- are  
12 you proposing that, like, as -- the CILs would be  
13 in charge -- like, overseeing the program and FFAST  
14 would be the conveyance for getting the equipment  
15 inventoried and -- I -- I don't know.

16 MS. JOHNSON: Mariah, you -- you raise a  
17 really good point. And it has actually come up in  
18 discussions with our centers about the deaf and  
19 hard-of-hearing centers because most of the CILs  
20 work closely with the local deaf and  
21 hard-of-hearing centers. So, no, we would  
22 absolutely want to include your organizations in  
23 the mix.

24 And, again, this is -- I'm -- this is put out  
25 as a -- as a draft proposal. We don't have the

1 details worked out, so -- so, I -- but to the --  
2 the second part of your question with what we  
3 envisioned, is that FFAST would be the  
4 administrator, and then, the deaf of hard-of-  
5 hearing centers and centers for independent living  
6 would be the local distribution sites. And then,  
7 you know -- but according to that equation, it  
8 would be the -- the business model that would  
9 actually work so that --

10 MS. DELGADO: Right. And that's a big part of  
11 it. I know we all -- we lose money every year  
12 providing amplified, you know, equipment, assistive  
13 equipment, but we do it because it's important to  
14 the community. So, our grants or fundraising and  
15 all of that help support it. And we do it because,  
16 you know, it is important.

17 MS. JOHNSON: And the centers for independent  
18 living are in the exact same boat. They continue  
19 to do it. It's the ones that have spoken -- in  
20 some cases, their boards have said, you can't keep  
21 running this program because we're having to  
22 subsidize it with other programs that serve  
23 other -- other purposes, so -- but yes, I think  
24 that -- you know, that was where -- that's what  
25 brought us to the table in the first place, trying

1 to -- to work with FTRI to come up with a better  
2 model.

3 And we just could never -- we've -- the  
4 contract has never been updated to -- to  
5 incentivize more -- you know, a better outcome.  
6 So, we -- that's why we -- we came back to the  
7 drawing board going, let's try to envision another  
8 way of doing this so that we can have the right  
9 incentives in place so that we get the -- you know,  
10 people needs get met.

11 And so -- so, I think, Mariah, you and I are  
12 actually in philosophical -- philosophical  
13 agreement about where we need to go. The details  
14 on how we get there, obviously, are still up to  
15 negotiations, but --

16 MS. DELGADO: Yeah.

17 MS. JOHNSON: -- I think that you at least  
18 have an open mind.

19 MR. FOGLEMAN: Jane, this is Greg Fogleman of  
20 the Florida Commission. Earlier on we heard Brett  
21 talk about a survey that he had sent out regarding  
22 kind of the costs that RDCs are facing.

23 Did the centers for independent living provide  
24 a response to that -- that data request?

25 MS. JOHNSON: The only survey I know of was

1 the one that Brett mentioned earlier in the meeting  
2 and, apparently, it went into a lot of peoples'  
3 spam folders.

4 MR. FOGLEMAN: That's ri- -- that's the one  
5 I'm referring to. Did -- did your centers for  
6 independent living respond to that yet?

7 MS. JOHNSON: Well, I don't know who is -- who  
8 is actually -- I know of two centers that received  
9 it. I don't know if the others did. So, I don't  
10 know. And that was sent yesterday, but I -- I'm  
11 pretty sure it was either yesterday -- it was this  
12 week that they finally got it and it was due on the  
13 15th of October. So, when they got it, they said,  
14 are we still supposed to respond to this because it  
15 was due ten days ago.

16 MR. FOGLEMAN: Very good. Thank you.

17 MS. DOYLE: Curtis, this is Whitney with  
18 FAAST. May I comment?

19 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, please, Whitney.

20 MS. DOYLE: Thank you so much.

21 So, this is Whitney. I'm the executive  
22 director for FAAST.

23 I appreciate Jane's insight and presentation  
24 that includes FAAST as potentially an administrator  
25 of this program.

1           And I just wanted to say we are absolutely  
2           committed to updating the technology through this  
3           program, regardless of if FFAST is the  
4           administrator or if FTRI is. You have our full  
5           support in helping to assist to make sure the  
6           technology features are updated because we  
7           absolutely agree and concur with that thought that  
8           the program is not sustainable without that sort of  
9           change.

10           And then I also just wanted to add that FFAST  
11           serves -- works with our regional distribution  
12           centers, as Jane mentioned, who are not exclusively  
13           CILs as well.

14           So, we are kind of looking at Jane's proposal  
15           through our own organization and trying to see what  
16           works best for us, if it were to come -- was to  
17           come to our house. And we, at this point, do not  
18           intend to exclusively partner with a certain entity  
19           over another, as we are dedicated to the end result  
20           of the best quality of service for people with  
21           disabilities, which certainly, in our agreement, is  
22           the CILs, but we know that that isn't the only  
23           organization that can provide a high-quality level  
24           of service.

25           So, we are looking at that through our end.

1 So, we are supportive of this conversation and  
2 supportive of the work that the TASA group does and  
3 are happy to move forward as what works best for us  
4 as an organization and what works best for  
5 Floridians.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Whitney. This is  
7 Curtis Williams. We appreciate your comments and  
8 we look forward to working with you, with FTRI,  
9 again, and with all the organizations involved.

10 (Background noise.)

11 THE COURT REPORTER: They've got to mute. I  
12 think there's too many live lines.

13 MS. HAGNER: This is Debbe. I have a  
14 question.

15 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, just one minute. One  
16 minute, Debbe.

17 This is Curtis Williams. Again, we'd like to  
18 remind everyone to please mute your phone when  
19 you're not speaking. We are getting quite a bit of  
20 background noise again that's causing some problems  
21 for our court reporter. If it -- if it continues,  
22 we -- we will have to take a break and kind of go  
23 offline and identify the line that's causing the  
24 problem. So, please, if you're not speaking,  
25 please mute your phone.

1 Thank you.

2 Go ahead, Debbe.

3 MS. HAGNER: Thank you.

4 We have three million or four million people  
5 with -- who are hard-of-hearing or deaf in -- in  
6 the state of Florida. I'm wondering how many of  
7 them really know about the 15 independent living  
8 centers, and if they know about the FTRI and  
9 FAA- -- FAAST. What are we doing to educate them  
10 and let them know that these services are out  
11 there?

12 And I happen to have an old TTY. Is there a  
13 place where I can re- -- have -- donate my old TTY  
14 for recycle? I mean, I wonder how many people are  
15 still using the TTYs and -- and if there's a place  
16 to reutilize for -- somewhere else for something  
17 else, rather than going to the dump.

18 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, FTRI, Brett, Tom, you want  
19 to -- you want to address Debbe's question,  
20 regarding outreach and refurbishing of the  
21 equipment?

22 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom, Florida  
23 Telecommunications Relay.

24 Yeah, Debbe, you could send an e-mail or -- or  
25 contact us or I can have our equipment-distribution

1 manager, Amelia Mauldin, contact you and -- with  
2 that, same piece of equipment that originally was  
3 from FTRI, we can pick that up and it will be  
4 refurbished and --

5 MS. HAGNER: No, I actually purchased the FTRI  
6 phone quite a -- 40 years ago.

7 MR. BASCOM: I understand, now. Okay.

8 MS. GAUT: Excuse me. This is Kim Gaut. May  
9 I speak?

10 Debbe, you can donate that TTY to any deaf  
11 service center. We'd be happy to have it to give  
12 to someone that could use it maybe who wouldn't  
13 qualify for the program, maybe they're -- they're  
14 not a resident of the state, but you could donate  
15 that to any deaf service center.

16 And I'd really like to speak to one other --  
17 one other point. And I think this is something  
18 that we're all overlooking is the fact that the --  
19 the PSC is in charge of this program. The PSC is  
20 the one that created FTRI and governs FTRI and  
21 decides the budget or approves the budget.

22 So, things that we're not getting paid for,  
23 things that are not cost-efficient for us -- still,  
24 it's going to be the PSC's decision whether to  
25 approve a budget, increase the budget, decrease the

1 budget.

2 So, until we start working together on  
3 legislative change so we can issue better and more  
4 state-of-the-art equipment, there's really not much  
5 more we can do about any of this.

6 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, this is Curtis Williams.

7 Debbe [sic], you -- you are correct. It's --  
8 there -- there is the continuing effort to find  
9 creative strategies, partnerships, to distribute  
10 more equipment that we are allowed to distribute  
11 within the guidelines of the current statute.

12 That's where the Commission -- we would  
13 encourage continued efforts and partnerships by  
14 FTRI, FFAST, the regional distribution centers,  
15 centers for independent living, senior centers,  
16 more strategic approaches from FTRI to come up with  
17 more -- better ways or -- or more productive ways  
18 to -- to -- to gain partnerships with -- with  
19 distributors.

20 So, you are correct in that regard, but again,  
21 as you said, there are statutory considerations to  
22 consider, also, in terms of expansion of the  
23 program.

24 MS. HAGNER: I have -- I also have -- this is  
25 Debbe. I have another comment.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Debbe.

2 MS. HAGNER: I think -- and I -- smoke alarms,  
3 or fire alarms, smoke detectors for the deaf and  
4 hard-of-hearing -- I mean, I can't even go to the  
5 store, Home Depot or Lowes, and buy a smoke  
6 detector with a strobe light.

7 I had to go to Amazon and buy it. I found out  
8 later, all I had to do was contact the Red Cross  
9 and the Red Cross would have given me the smoke  
10 alarm, but this is -- this is a necessity. And you  
11 wonder how many people still have smoke detectors  
12 that are more than ten years old. If it's more  
13 than ten years old, then it's no longer good,  
14 and -- and you can die.

15 So, I'd like to add, under the equipment, that  
16 people should have newer smoke detectors with the  
17 strobe light and go after the manufacturers, please  
18 bring that back the way it used to be, with the --  
19 and not having separate unit, but have it together.

20 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Debbe, this is Curtis  
21 Williams.

22 FTRI -- the -- again, under the -- the current  
23 statute, they are -- the mandate is for them to  
24 distribute telecommunications equipment that's  
25 associated with landline service. So, any

1 equipment that they distribute will have to fit the  
2 definition of a telecommunications service. I --  
3 smoke alarms would not fall under that definition.

4 Brett, Tom, if you would like to add comments,  
5 feel free to do so.

6 MR. BASCOM: This is Brett Bascom, Florida  
7 Telecommunications Relay.

8 I've been here since 1994, and we have never  
9 distributed smoke alarms or things like that that  
10 are not telecommunications devices. So, I'm not  
11 sure if the Commission would allow that in the  
12 future, but just something for -- in the future.

13 MR. WILLIAMS: And, Debbe, you raise a good  
14 point and it is a serious -- serious issue, serious  
15 concern. It's just, again, similar to the  
16 distribution of wireless technologies, the  
17 Commission and FTRI is -- is required to distribute  
18 equipment based on what's in the -- the statute.

19 So, I'm not sure who would be able to provide  
20 assistance for that, but the --

21 MS. JOHNSON: Curtis --

22 MR. WILLIAMS: -- smoke detectors --

23 MS. JOHNSON: -- this is Jane Johnson.

24 MR. WILLIAMS: -- would not fall there.

25 MS. JOHNSON: Curtis, this is Jane Johnson.

1           And if a person went into a center for  
2           independent living and they had a  
3           telecommunications need, they could be educated  
4           about the various devices that are available to  
5           them, but they could also learn of other services  
6           that they might need in their home; everything from  
7           smoke detectors or adaptable, assessable smoke  
8           detectors to durable medical equipment to peer-  
9           support services, employment services,  
10          transportation.

11           MR. WILLIAMS: Right. Right. That's --

12           MS. JOHNSON: So, that's another reason why,  
13           in looking at the people that we are here to serve,  
14           the whole reason we're -- all of us are on this  
15           call, is -- is our end users.

16           If we look at a system that put them at -- at  
17           the front, I think, then, we would build backwards  
18           a system that was -- is easy to access as possible  
19           and required as few entry points as possible so  
20           they could get their needs met.

21           MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you very much, Jane.  
22           Thank you.

23           Are there any additional questions?

24           MR. McCABE: Curtis, this is Tom McCabe.

25           MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, Tom.

1           MR. McCABE: I just wanted to mention that --  
2           I just wanted to mention that the FTRI -- the  
3           employees as well as the board -- I mean, we  
4           support the advancement of the FTRI in terms of  
5           distributing wireless equipment, but as we have  
6           said, that the statute needs to be changed.

7           There are -- I believe, every state, all 50  
8           states, have a Florida Relay -- have a relay system  
9           that is run by the -- governed by the public  
10          service commissions.

11          Not all states have --

12          UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Not all.

13          MR. McCABE: -- distribution, but most of them  
14          do have a distribution center.

15          So, we don't -- you know, we're not opposed to  
16          distributing that equipment, but at this time, the  
17          way the statute is written, there have been pieces  
18          of equipment that we have brought to the Commission  
19          to -- as an effort to be able to provide, but it  
20          did not meet the statutory definition, and  
21          therefore, they were rejected.

22          So, all of the equipment that is provided is  
23          what we can technically provide today by statute.  
24          Any changes require legislative fix. Moving the  
25          program over to FFAST, without legislative fix,

1 does not change what equipment is going to be  
2 distributed.

3 FAAST certainly could go ahead and distribute  
4 wireless equipment, but it would not be paid for by  
5 the funding that comes through the FTRI. So,  
6 therefore, there would be no funding source. So,  
7 FAAST would not end up distributing that equipment.

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Tom.

9 MR. McCABE: And we will be -- and we've got a  
10 new executive director that's going to be coming  
11 in. And I'm sure that he will be happy to sit down  
12 with everybody and look at the compensation  
13 arrangement that is being provided today and see if  
14 it needs to be changed.

15 MS. HAGNER: This is Debbe.

16 Is it possible the lawyer that we have on --  
17 on board -- all of us write a petition or do we  
18 have to write a letter to our Congressman saying we  
19 want to change in the legislature?

20 MS. DELGADO: Hi, this is Mariah Delgado.

21 I was actually working with James Forstall and  
22 I talked with Jane Johnson a couple of times in  
23 2019 and we started working on changing the  
24 legislation.

25 You have to have somebody from the state

1           representatives to back you. And then it goes  
2           through committees and all these different steps,  
3           until it's finally voted on.

4           So, the key is to get -- I mean, I have half  
5           the work done, but the key is to get somebody who  
6           will push the bill for you in Congress and get it  
7           passed.

8           MR. WILLIAMS: That -- and this is Curtis --

9           MS. DELGADO: So, if anybody knows their local  
10          legislature -- legislators, you know, who might get  
11          behind something like this, then you could contact  
12          them and feel them out.

13          MR. BRANCH: This is Jeff Branch speaking.

14          For some people in the meeting today, let me  
15          suggest that you reach out to the Florida  
16          Association of the Deaf. That association has, I  
17          believe, a legislative representative.

18          I don't know, though, if the Florida  
19          Association of the Deaf knows of other concerns of  
20          deaf and hard-of-hearing Floridians, but I would  
21          suggest that as a starting place. I think they  
22          would be happy to listen to your concerns and,  
23          perhaps, work with you.

24          So, just food for thought that Florida  
25          Association of the Deaf may be the place to start.

1 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Jeff.

2 Are there any additional remarks or  
3 discussion?

4 MS. JOHNSON: Curtis, this is Jane Johnson.

5 And I just want to thank everyone on the call  
6 for allowing us to share our perspectives and for  
7 your -- your questions and your patience.

8 And, again, I think we all -- I know that we  
9 all are here for the same purpose, to serve our  
10 consumers. And I just -- I really would -- I'm  
11 saying this in the spirit of partnership that I  
12 hope we can all come together in a solution that  
13 does improve outcomes, does serve more people,  
14 and -- and we can work together.

15 So, again, I just -- we -- on behalf of the  
16 centers for independent living, we really do  
17 appreciate this opportunity to try and think  
18 differently about something that's -- that it has  
19 been a challenge in recent years.

20 Thank you.

21 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Jane.

22 Are there any final remarks or discussion  
23 before we conclude?

24 Hearing none, I would like to thank everyone  
25 for participating. And we will plan to schedule

1 another meeting in the spring. We will send out an  
2 advanced notice for suggestions on -- on topics.  
3 And we look forward to everyone participating in  
4 that meeting.

5 So, if there aren't any other comments or  
6 remarks, that concludes today's meeting. Again,  
7 thank you. And we are adjourned.

8 (Whereupon, the proceedings concluded at 3:16  
9 p.m.)

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

1  
2  
3  
4  
5  
6  
7  
8  
9  
10  
11  
12  
13  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
21  
22  
23  
24  
25

CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

STATE OF FLORIDA )  
COUNTY OF LEON )

I, ANDREA KOMARIDIS WRAY, Court Reporter, do hereby certify that the foregoing proceeding was heard at the time and place herein stated.

IT IS FURTHER CERTIFIED that I stenographically reported the said proceedings; that the same has been transcribed under my direct supervision; and that this transcript constitutes a true transcription of my notes of said proceedings.

I FURTHER CERTIFY that I am not a relative, employee, attorney or counsel of any of the parties, nor am I a relative or employee of any of the parties' attorney or counsel connected with the action, nor am I financially interested in the action.

DATED THIS 9th day of November, 2021.



---

ANDREA KOMARIDIS WRAY  
NOTARY PUBLIC  
COMMISSION #HH 089181  
EXPIRES February 9, 2025