



Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans

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January 28, 2015

Chair Beverly Jones Heydinger
Commissioner David C. Boyd
Commissioner Nancy Lange
Commissioner Dan Lipschultz
Commissioner Betsy Wergin

Dear Commissioners Heydinger, Boyd, Lange, Lipschultz, and Wergin:

We write with great concern about Charter's refusal to pay into the Telecommunications Access Minnesota (TAM) fund. (In the Matter of the Complaint by the Minnesota Department of Commerce Against the Charter Affiliates Regarding Transfer of Customers, Docket No. P-6716, 5615/C-14-383)

TAM fees support Minnesota Relay and the Telephone Equipment Distribution program, which provide critical services to Deaf, DeafBlind and hard of hearing Minnesotans. Without this service and program, the state would not be able to provide universal service to deaf, deafblind and hard of hearing Minnesotans – one of the explicit goals of the Commission (Minnesota Statutes, section 237.011).

A telephone is a telephone, regardless of the technology that is used to transmit the data. We urge the Commission to regulate VOIP providers and require that Charter pay into the TAM fund. Not to do so would set a terrible precedent that could put the long term viability of the services it funds at risk.

The Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans, a Governor appointed state agency, serves as the principal agency of the state to advocate on behalf of Minnesotans who are deaf, deafblind, and hard-of-hearing, twenty percent of the state's population, by working to ensure those persons have equal access to the services, programs, and opportunities available to others. (MS256C.28)

Thank you for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mary Hartnett".

Mary Hartnett
Executive Director

Commission of Deaf, DeafBlind and Hard of Hearing Minnesotans

CC: David Rosenthal, Director; Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division
Adan Burke, President; Minnesota Association of Deaf Citizens
Christine Morgan, President; Hearing Loss Association of America Twin Cities Chapter

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