

**No. 118. An act relating to establishment of a communication facilitator program.**

(H.429)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. 30 V.S.A. § 218a(d) is amended to read:

(d) The Department of Public Service shall establish the Vermont Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Council composed of the following members: one representative of the Department of Public Service, ~~who shall act as chair and who shall be~~ designated by the Commissioner of Public Service; one representative of the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, ~~who shall act as vice chair~~; two representatives of the deaf community; one member of the community of people who are hard of hearing or have a speech limitation; one representative of a company providing local exchange service within the State; and one representative of an organization currently providing telecommunications relay services. The Council shall elect from among its members a chair and vice chair. Meetings shall be convened at the call of the Chair or a majority of the members of the Council. The Council shall meet not more than six times a year. The members of the Council who are not officers or employees of the State shall receive per diem compensation and expense reimbursement in amounts authorized by 32 V.S.A. § 1010(b). The costs of ~~such~~ the compensation and reimbursement, and any other necessary administrative costs shall be included within the contract entered into under subsection (c) of this section. The Council shall

advise the Department of Public Service and the contractor for telecommunications relay services on all matters concerning the implementation and administration of the State's telecommunications relay service.

Sec. 2. COMMUNICATION FACILITATOR PROGRAM; STUDY

The Commissioner of Public Service, in consultation with the Commissioner of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living, shall make findings and recommendations regarding the establishment of a communication facilitator program in Vermont that would enable members of the DeafBlind community to make telephone calls. The Commissioner shall solicit input from representatives or members of the DeafBlind community in Vermont and shall take into consideration similar programs offered in other jurisdictions. The Commissioner's findings shall include the administrative and implementation costs of the program; the number of individuals in the DeafBlind community in Vermont; expected participation in the program; and an assessment of whether there are grant opportunities to help defray program costs. The Commissioner's recommendations shall include a funding source for the program. The Commissioner shall report his or her findings and recommendations on or before December 15, 2018 to the House Committees on Energy and Technology and on Human Services and the Senate Committees on Finance and on Health and Welfare.

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Sec. 3. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Date Governor signed bill: May 2, 2018