

**PENNSYLVANIA
PUBLIC UTILITY COMMISSION
Harrisburg, PA 17120**

Public Meeting held February 19, 2026

Commissioners Present:

Stephen M. DeFrank, Chairman
Kimberly Barrow, Vice Chair
Kathryn L. Zerfuss
John F. Coleman, Jr.
Ralph V. Yanora

Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay
Service Advisory Board

M-00900239

OPINION AND ORDER

BY THE COMMISSION:

The Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service (TRS) is a communications service regulated by the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission (Commission) that offers a person with disabilities the ability to communicate “by wire or radio with a hearing individual in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of a person who does not have a disability to communicate using voice communication services by wire or radio,” *i.e.*, access to the Public Switched Telephone Network in the same manner as a person without disability.¹ TRS offers persons, who are deaf, hearing, or speech impaired, three ways to connect to the service using various means: Traditional Telephone Relay, Video Relay and Internet Relay. Users who access TRS by telephone simply dial 7-1-1 to connect to a skillfully-trained Communications Assistant (CA) who follows a strict code of ethics and confidentiality for telephone TRS communications.

¹35 P.S. § 6701.2; *see also* 35 P.S. § 6701.4.

The CA then relays messages to the other person. TRS is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

By Order entered May 29, 1990 (*May 29, 1990 Order*), the Commission established the Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board (TRS Advisory Board) for the purpose of reviewing the success of TRS in Pennsylvania. The TRS Advisory Board was also assigned the task of identifying any additional improvements which might need to be implemented to ensure the continued success of the TRS program. The TRS Advisory Board is composed of the following representatives: Hamilton Relay Inc. (Hamilton Relay) (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms); Hamilton Telephone Company d/b/a Hamilton Telecommunications (Hamilton Telephone) (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms);² the Pennsylvania Telephone Association (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms); the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry's Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ODHH) (1 representative who may serve unlimited terms), and from the community of persons who are, or who have experience with, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those with language and speech disorders (7 representatives who may serve an unlimited number of two-year terms, subject to reappointment by the Commission).³ The TRS Advisory Board meets quarterly in Harrisburg and functions as a user group providing guidance in such areas as problem solving and future enhancements.

² Hamilton Relay is the certificated jurisdictional provider for intrastate TRS in the Commonwealth. *See* Docket No. A-2014-2447601. Hamilton Telephone is the contractual provider for intrastate Captioned Telephone Relay Service in the Commonwealth. *See* Docket No. A-311355.

³During its regular quarterly meeting held on March 1, 2023, the TRS Advisory Board amended its Bylaws to include, *inter alia*, the expansion of the number of terms the community representatives may serve from up to three, two-year terms, to an unlimited number of two-year terms, subject to renewed appointment by the Commission. To avoid the appearance of co-mingling advisory and adjudicatory functions, the TRS Advisory Board's amendments to its Bylaws also clarified that the two representatives from the Commission will no longer serve as voting members of the TRS Advisory Board, but as staff providing technical support.

The TRS Advisory Board By-Laws provide for 7 representatives from the community of persons who are, or who have experience with, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or those with language and speech disorders, to serve on the TRS Advisory Board. The nominee for the TRS Advisory Board for the two-year term ending January 31, 2023, is Paul Richard McGann Jr. Mr. McGann previously served on the TRS Advisory Board from 1992-2000.

Mr. McGann's credentials and resume demonstrate decades of expertise, commitment, and service to the deaf-blind community. Now retired, Mr. McGann served from 1974 as an intervenor, supply manager, and briallist for the Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children, from 1988 as an instructor of the Interpreter Training Program for the Community College of Allegheny County, and has led numerous projects and given many workshops on deafblindness. He was a founder of the Western Pennsylvania Association of the Deaf-Blind and the Pittsburgh DeafBlind Lions Club. Mr. McGann has been and/or continues to be an active member of many deaf and deafblind disability organizations, including the American Association of the Deaf-Blind (for which he has served as a board member and vice president); the Pittsburgh Association for the Deaf; the Pennsylvania Society of Advancement for the Deaf; the National Association of DeafBlind Americans; the Helen Keller National Center for the Deaf-Blind; the DeafBlind Project Hand-in-Hand; the Allegheny County Task Force on Behavioral and Mental Health for Deaf, Hard-of-Hearing and Deafblind; and the Pennsylvania Partnership for the DeafBlind. As noted, Mr. McGann previously served on the TRS Advisory Board, and he also worked to establish Pennsylvania's Telecommunications Device Distribution Program (TDDP).⁴

Mr. McGann's expertise, input, and renewed service would prove beneficial to the TRS Advisory Board; **THEREFORE,**

⁴ See generally 35 P.S. § 6701.3.

IT IS ORDERED:

1. That the appointment of Mr. Paul Richard McGann Jr. to the Pennsylvania Telecommunications Relay Service Advisory Board for the two-year term ending February 19, 2028 is approved.
2. That a copy of this Opinion and Order be served on Richard McGann.

BY THE COMMISSION,



Matthew Homsher
Secretary

(SEAL)

ORDER ADOPTED: February 19, 2026

ORDER ENTERED: February 19, 2026