1 A bill to be entitled 2 An act relating to the telecommunications access 3 system; amending s. 427.702, F.S.; revising 4 legislative findings, purpose, and intent relating to 5 the telecommunications access system; recognizing that 6 the 21st Century Communications and Video 7 Accessibility Act mandates additional safeguards 8 ensuring that persons who have a hearing loss are able 9 to access Internet-based and digital communications; amending s. 427.703, F.S.; revising definitions to 10 11 conform to changes made by the act; amending s. 12 427.704, F.S.; revising the powers and duties of the 1.3 Public Service Commission; requiring that the commission establish a recovery mechanism that 14 15 requires commercial mobile radio service providers to 16 impose a monthly surcharge on its subscribers; 17 amending s. 427.705, F.S.; revising provisions 18 relating to the administration of the telecommunications access system; providing for the 19 distribution of wireless mobile devices to qualified 20 persons; amending s. 427.706, F.S.; revising the 21 22 membership of the advisory committee that assists the 23 commission with the administration and operation of 2.4 the telecommunications access system; amending s. 25 427.708, F.S.; requiring that the commission annually 26 ensure that public safety and health care providers 27 are complying with the requirement to purchase and 28 operate telecommunications devices for the deaf or any

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other appropriate telecommunications devices and submit a report of its findings to the advisory committee; providing an effective date.

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Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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Section 1. Section 427.702, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

427.702 Findings, purpose, and legislative intent.-

- (1) The Legislature finds and declares that:
- (a) Telecommunications services provide a rapid and essential communications link among the general public and with essential offices and organizations such as police, fire, and medical facilities.
- (b) All persons should have basic telecommunications services available to them at reasonable and affordable costs.
- (c) A significant portion of Florida's <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard-of-hearing</u>, <u>hearing impaired</u> and <u>speech-impaired</u> <u>speech impaired</u> populations has profound disabilities, including dual sensory impairments, which render normal telephone <u>or mobile wireless</u> equipment useless without additional specialized telecommunications devices, many of which cost several hundred dollars.
- (d) The telecommunications system is intended to provide access to a basic communications network between all persons, and that many persons who have a hearing <u>loss</u> impairment or speech impairment <u>do not</u> currently have no access to the basic telecommunications system.

(e) Persons who do not have a hearing <u>loss</u> impairment or speech impairment are generally excluded from access to the basic telecommunications system to communicate with persons who have a hearing <u>loss</u> impairment or speech impairment without the use of specialized telecommunications devices.

- (f) There exists a need for a telecommunications relay system whereby the cost for access to basic telecommunications services for persons who have a hearing <u>loss</u> impairment or speech impairment is no greater than the amount paid by other telecommunications customers.
- (g) The Federal Government, in order to carry out the purposes established by Title II of the Communications Act of 1934, as amended, by the enactment of the Americans with Disabilities Act, endeavored to ensure that interstate and intrastate telecommunications relay services are available, to the extent possible and in the most efficient manner, to deaf, hard-of-hearing, hearing impaired and speech-impaired speech impaired persons in the United States.
- (h) Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act mandates that the telecommunications companies providing telephone services within the state shall provide telecommunications relay services on or before July 25, 1993, to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, impaired or speech impaired within their certificated territories in a manner that meets or exceeds the requirements of regulations to be prescribed by the Federal Communications Commission.
- (i) The 21st Century Communications and Video

 Accessibility Act of 2010 mandates additional safeguards

ensuring that persons who have a hearing loss are able to access Internet-based and digital communications.

- (2) It is the declared purpose of this part to establish a system whereby the residents eitizens of Florida who are deaf, hard of hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired have access to basic telecommunications services at a cost no greater than that paid by other telecommunications services customers, and whereby the cost of specialized telecommunications equipment necessary to ensure that residents eitizens who are deaf, hard of hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired have access to basic telecommunications services and the provision of telecommunications relay service is borne by all the telecommunications customers of the state.
 - (3) It is the intent of the Legislature:
- (a) That a telecommunications access system be established to provide equitable basic access to the telecommunications network for persons who are <u>deaf</u>, hard of hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired.
- (b) That the telecommunications access system includes a telecommunications relay service system that meets or exceeds the certification requirements of the Federal Communications Commission.
- (c) That the telecommunications access system includes the distribution of telecommunications devices for the deaf which that are compatible with the telecommunications relay service system and has the capability of incorporating new technologies as they develop.

(d) That the telecommunications access system includes the distribution of specialized telecommunications devices necessary for deaf, hard-of-hearing hearing impaired, speech-impaired speech impaired, or dual sensory-impaired sensory impaired persons to access basic telecommunications services.

- (e) That the telecommunications access system ensures that users of the telecommunications relay service system pay rates no greater than the rates paid for functionally equivalent voice communications services.
- (f) That the telecommunications access system be as cost efficient as possible without diminishing the effectiveness or the quality of the system.
- (g) That the telecommunications access system uses state-of-the-art technology for specialized telecommunications devices and the telecommunications relay service and encourages the incorporation of new developments in technology, to the extent that it has demonstrated benefits consistent with the intent of this act and is in the best interest of the <u>residents</u> citizens of this state.
- (h) That the value of the involvement of persons who <u>are</u> <u>deaf, hard of have</u> hearing, or speech <u>impaired impairments</u>, and organizations representing or serving those persons, be recognized and such persons and organizations be involved throughout the development, establishment, and implementation of the telecommunications access system through participation on the advisory committee as provided in s. 427.706.
- (i) That the total cost of providing telecommunications relay services and distributing specialized telecommunications

devices be spread equitably among and collected from customers of all local exchange telecommunications companies <u>and</u> commercial mobile radio service providers.

Section 2. Subsections (3), (5), (6), (11), (12), (13), and (16) of section 427.703, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

427.703 Definitions.—As used in this part:

- (3) "Deaf" means having a <u>severe</u> permanent hearing <u>loss</u> that makes it difficult to understand speech through listening with or without an auditory device. Some deaf individuals may depend on visual or tactile methods, or both, to communicate impairment and being unable to discriminate speech sounds in verbal communication, with or without the assistance of amplification devices.
- (5) "Hard of hearing" means having a <u>severe permanent</u> hearing <u>loss that interferes with the ability to process</u>

 <u>linguistic information through audition with or without an auditory device. A hard-of-hearing individual may depend on hearing and assistive devices or visual methods, or both, to <u>communicate impairment which is severe enough to necessitate the use of amplification devices to discriminate speech sounds in verbal communication.</u></u>
- (6) "Hearing <u>loss</u> <u>impaired</u>" or "having a hearing <u>loss</u> <u>impairment</u>" means deaf or hard of hearing and, for purposes of this part, includes being dual sensory impaired.
- (11) "Specialized telecommunications device" means a telecommunications device for the deaf (TDD) TDD, an amplified telephone, a captioned telephone a volume control handset, a

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ring signaling device, <u>a mobile wireless device such as a cellular telephone designed for deaf or hard-of-hearing persons</u>, or any other customer premises telecommunications equipment specifically designed or used to provide basic access to telecommunications services for a <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard-of-hearing hearing impaired</u>, <u>speech-impaired speech impaired</u>, or dual <u>sensory-impaired sensory-impaired</u> person.

- (12) "Surcharge" means an additional charge that which is to be paid by the subscribers of a local exchange telecommunications company or a commercial mobile radio service provider subscribers pursuant to the cost-recovery cost recovery mechanism established under s. 427.704(4) in order to implement the system described in this part herein.
- corporation, partnership, and person and their lessees, trustees, or receivers appointed by any court whatsoever, and every political subdivision of the state, offering two-way telecommunications service to the public for hire within this state by the use of a telecommunications facility. The term "telecommunications company" does not include an entity that which provides a telecommunications facility exclusively to a certificated telecommunications company, but may include or a specialized mobile radio service operator, a private radio carrier, a radio common carrier, a cellular radio telecommunications carrier, or a cable television company providing cable service as defined in 47 U.S.C. s. 522.
- (16) "Telecommunications relay service" means any telecommunications transmission service that allows a person who

is <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard of</u> hearing, <u>impaired</u> or speech impaired to communicate by wire, <u>wireless</u>, or radio in a manner that is functionally equivalent to the ability of a person who is not <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard of</u> hearing, <u>impaired</u> or speech impaired. <u>The Such</u> term includes any service that enables two-way communication between a person who uses a telecommunications device or other <u>nonaudio</u> <u>nonvoice</u> terminal device and a person who does not use such a device.

Section 3. Subsection (1), paragraph (a) of subsection (3), and subsections (4) and (5) of section 427.704, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

427.704 Powers and duties of the commission.

- (1) The commission shall establish, implement, promote, and oversee the administration of a statewide telecommunications access system to provide access to telecommunications relay services by persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, impaired or speech impaired, or others who communicate with them. The telecommunications access system must shall provide for the purchase and distribution of specialized telecommunications devices and the establishment of statewide single provider telecommunications relay service system that which operates continuously. In order to provide telecommunications relay services and distribute specialized telecommunication devices to persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, impaired or speech impaired, at a reasonable cost, the commission shall:
- (a) Investigate, conduct public hearings, and solicit the advice and counsel of the advisory committee established pursuant to s. 427.706 to determine the most cost-effective

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method for providing telecommunications relay service and distributing specialized telecommunications devices.

- (b) Ensure that users of the telecommunications relay service system pay rates no greater than the rates paid for functionally equivalent voice communication services with respect to such factors as duration of the call, time of day, and distance from the point of origination to the point of termination.
- (c) Ensure that the telecommunications access system protects the privacy of persons to whom services are provided and that all operators maintain the confidentiality of all relay service messages.
- (d) Ensure that the telecommunications relay service system complies with regulations adopted by the Federal Communications Commission to implement Title IV of the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- (3) (a) The commission shall select the provider of the telecommunications relay service pursuant to procedures established by the commission. In selecting the service provider, the commission shall take into consideration the cost of providing the relay service and the interests of the deaf, hard-of-hearing, hearing impaired and speech-impaired speech impaired community in having access to a high-quality and technologically advanced telecommunications system. The commission shall award the contract to the bidder whose proposal is the most advantageous to the state, taking into consideration the following:
 - 1. The appropriateness and accessibility of the proposed

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telecommunications relay service for the <u>residents</u> of the state, including persons who are <u>deaf</u>, hard of hearing, <u>impaired</u> or speech impaired.

- 2. The overall quality of the proposed telecommunications relay service.
- 3. The charges for the proposed telecommunications relay service system.
- 4. The ability and qualifications of the bidder to provide the proposed telecommunications relay service as outlined in the request for proposals.
- 5. Any proposed service enhancements and technological enhancements $\underline{\text{that}}$ which improve service without significantly increasing cost.
- 6. Any proposed inclusion of provision of assistance to deaf persons with special needs to access the basic telecommunications system.
- 7. The ability to meet the proposed commencement date for the telecommunications relay service.
 - 8. All other factors listed in the request for proposals.
- (4) (a) The commission shall establish a mechanism to recover the costs of implementing and maintaining the services required pursuant to this part, which shall be applied to each basic telecommunications access line. In establishing the recovery mechanism, the commission shall:
- 1. Require all local exchange telecommunications companies and commercial mobile radio service providers to impose a monthly surcharge on their all local exchange telecommunications company subscribers on an individual access line basis, except

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that such surcharge $\underline{\text{may}}$ shall not be imposed upon more than 25 basic telecommunications access lines per account bill rendered.

- 2. Require all local exchange telecommunications companies and commercial mobile radio service providers to include the surcharge as a part of the local service charge that appears on the customer's bill, except that the local exchange telecommunications company or commercial mobile radio service provider shall specify the surcharge on the initial bill to the subscriber and itemize it at least once annually.
- 3. Allow the local exchange telecommunications company <u>or commercial mobile radio service provider</u> to deduct and retain 1 percent of the total surcharge amount collected each month to recover the billing, collecting, remitting, and administrative costs attributed to the surcharge.
- (b) The commission shall determine the amount of the surcharge based upon the amount of funding necessary to accomplish the purposes of this act and provide the services on an ongoing basis; however, in no case shall the amount may not exceed 25 cents per line per month.
- (c) All moneys received by the local exchange telecommunications company or commercial mobile radio service provider, less the amount retained as authorized by subparagraph (4)(a)3., shall be remitted to the administrator for deposit in appropriate financial institutions regulated under state or federal law and used exclusively to fund the telecommunications access system provided for in this part herein.
- (d) The surcharge collected by the local exchange telecommunications companies and commercial mobile radio service

providers is not subject to any sales, use, franchise, income, municipal utility, gross receipts, or any other tax, fee, or assessment, and nor shall it is not be considered revenue of the local exchange telecommunications companies or commercial mobile radio service providers for any purpose.

- (e) From the date of implementing the surcharge, the commission shall review the amount of the surcharge at least annually and shall order changes in the amount of the surcharge as necessary to ensure assure available funds for the provision of the telecommunications access system established in this part herein. If Where the review of the surcharge determines that excess funds are available, the commission may order the suspension of the surcharge for a period that which the commission deems appropriate.
- telecommunications company and commercial mobile radio service provider to begin assessing and collecting the surcharge in the amount of 5 cents per access line per month on bills rendered on or after July 1, 2013 1991, for remission to the administrator for deposit in the operational fund. Each local exchange telecommunications company and commercial mobile radio service provider shall remit moneys collected to the administrator. On August 15, 2013 1991, each local exchange telecommunications company and commercial mobile radio service provider shall begin remitting the moneys collected to the administrator on a monthly basis and in a manner as prescribed by the commission. The administrator shall use such moneys to cover costs incurred during the development of the telecommunications relay services

and to establish and administer the specialized telecommunications devices system.

- Section 4. Paragraph (d) of subsection (1), subsections
- 340 (3) and (4), paragraph (a) of subsection (5), and subsections
 - (6) and (7) of section 427.705, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:
 - $427.705\,$ Administration of the telecommunications access system.—
 - (1) Consistent with the provisions of this act and rules and regulations established by the commission, the administrator shall:
 - (d) Establish and maintain an operational fund with appropriate financial institutions regulated under state or federal law, and receive moneys from the local exchange telecommunications companies and commercial mobile radio service providers and deposit such moneys in the operational fund.
 - (3) The administrator may apply to the commission for an adjustment in the amount of the monthly surcharge that a local exchange telecommunications company or commercial mobile radio service provider must impose on its customers. Before Prior to applying to the commission for such an adjustment, the commission may require the administrator to employ an independent accounting firm to perform an audit of the accounts of the administrator and the service providers relevant to the surcharge and file a report with the commission.
 - (4) In contracting for the provision of distribution of specialized telecommunications devices, outreach services, and training of recipients, the administrator shall consider

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contracting with organizations that provide services to persons who are <u>deaf</u>, <u>hard of</u> hearing, <u>impaired</u> or speech impaired.

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- (5) The administrator shall provide for the distribution of specialized telecommunications devices to persons qualified to receive such equipment in accordance with the provisions of this act. The administrator shall establish procedures for the distribution of specialized telecommunications devices and shall solicit the advice and counsel and consider the recommendations of the advisory committee in establishing such procedures. The procedures <u>must shall</u>:
- Provide for certification of persons as deaf, hard of hearing impaired, speech impaired, or dual sensory impaired. Such certification process must shall include a statement attesting to such impairment by a licensed physician, audiologist, speech-language pathologist, hearing aid specialist, or deaf and hard-of-hearing service center director; by a state-certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing impaired; by a state-certified teacher of the visually impaired; or by an appropriate state or federal agency. The licensed physician, audiologist, speech-language pathologist, hearing aid specialist, state-certified teacher of the deaf and hard of hearing impaired, or state-certified teacher of the visually impaired providing statements that which attest to such impairments shall work within their individual scopes of practice according to their education and training. The deaf and hard-of-hearing service center directors and appropriate state and federal agencies shall attest to such impairments as provided for in the procedures developed by the administrator.

(6) All names, addresses, and telephone numbers provided to the Florida Public Service commission or administrator by applicants for specialized telecommunications devices are confidential and exempt from the provisions of s. 119.07(1). The information shall be released to contractors only to the extent necessary for assignment and shipment of equipment, for provision of training in the use of equipment, and for inventory reconciliation purposes. Neither The administrator or any contractor may not shall release this information or nor use it for any other purpose.

- (7) The administrator shall assume responsibility for distribution of specialized telecommunications devices.
- Section 5. Subsections (1) and (2) of section 427.706, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:
 - 427.706 Advisory committee.-

- (1) The commission shall appoint an advisory committee to assist the commission with the <u>administration</u> implementation of the provisions of this part. The committee shall be composed of no more than $\underline{11}$ $\underline{10}$ persons and shall include, to the extent practicable, the following:
- (a) Two deaf persons recommended by the Florida Association of the Deaf.
- (b) <u>Two hard-of-hearing persons</u> One hearing impaired person recommended by the Hearing Loss Association of Florida Self-Help for the Hard of Hearing.
- (c) One deaf and blind person recommended by the <u>Florida</u>
 Deaf-Blind Association Coalition for Persons with Dual Sensory

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421 Disabilities.

- (d) One speech impaired person recommended by the Florida Language Speech and Hearing Association.
- (e) $\underline{\text{Three}}$ $\underline{\text{Two}}$ representatives of telecommunications companies.
- (f) One person who has with experience in providing relay services recommended by the Deaf Service Center Association.
- (g) One person recommended by <u>Disability Rights Florida</u> the Advocacy Center for Persons with <u>Disabilities</u>, <u>Inc.</u>
- (h) One person recommended by the Florida League of Seniors.
- experience, and perspective of persons who are <u>deaf</u>, hard of hearing, <u>impaired</u> or speech impaired to the commission and to the administrator during all phases of the development and operation of the telecommunications access system. The advisory committee shall advise the commission and the administrator on the quality and cost-effectiveness of the telecommunications relay service and the specialized telecommunications devices distribution system. The advisory committee may submit material for inclusion in the annual report prepared pursuant to s. 427.704.
- Section 6. Section 427.708, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:
- 427.708 Certain public safety and health care providers required to purchase and operate TDD's <u>or other appropriate</u> telecommunications devices.—
 - (1) The central communications office of each county

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sheriff's department shall purchase and continually operate at least one TDD or other appropriate telecommunications device.

- (2)(a) The central communications office of each police department and each firefighting agency in a municipality with a population of 25,000 to 250,000 shall purchase and continually operate at least one TDD or other appropriate telecommunications device.
- (b) The central communications office of each police department and each firefighting agency in a municipality with a population exceeding 250,000 persons shall purchase and continually operate at least two TDD's or other appropriate telecommunications devices.
- (3) Each hospital as defined in s. 395.002 shall purchase and continually operate at least one TDD or other appropriate telecommunications device.
- (4) Each emergency telephone number "911" system, as provided in s. 365.171, and each agency receiving automatically routed calls through such a system shall purchase and continually operate at least one TDD or other appropriate telecommunications device.
- (5) Each public safety office, health care provider, and emergency telephone number "911" system required to obtain a TDD or other appropriate telecommunications device pursuant to this section shall continuously operate and staff such equipment on a 24-hour basis.
- (6) Each office or organization required to purchase TDD's or other appropriate telecommunications devices pursuant to this section shall buy such equipment that which meets the same

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specifications as those selected by the commission.

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- (7) Each office or organization required to operate TDD's or other appropriate telecommunications devices pursuant to this section shall utilize equipment in accordance with standards established by the commission.
- (8) The Public Service Commission shall ensure on an annual basis that public safety and health care providers are in compliance with this section and shall submit a report that includes its findings to the advisory committee established under s. 427.706.
 - Section 7. This act shall take effect July 1, 2013.