

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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(EMERGENCY)
FIRST REGULAR SESSION

ONE HUNDRED AND NINTH LEGISLATURE

Legislative Document

No. 329

S. P. 152

In Senate, February 6, 1979

Referred to the Committee on Health and Institutional Services. Sent down for concurrence and ordered printed.

Presented by Senator Gill of Cumberland.

MAY M. ROSS, Secretary of the Senate

STATE OF MAINE

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD NINETEEN HUNDRED
SEVENTY-NINE

AN ACT Concerning Telecommunications for the Deaf.

Emergency preamble. Whereas, Acts of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, deaf and hearing impaired people must use teletypewriters in order to make telephone calls; and

Whereas, the only means for deaf and hearing impaired persons to engage in telephone communications with nondeaf persons is through a teletypewriter-vocal telephone relay service; and

Whereas, the telephone relay services presently provided in Bangor, Lewiston and Portland are in jeopardy and will lose their funding on March 31, 1979; and

Whereas, without telephone relay services deaf and hearing impaired people will lack a primary means of obtaining fire, police, medical and other emergency services, obtaining information about and access to government programs and services and communicating generally with the rest of society; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore,

Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine, as follows:

22 MRSA c. 961 is enacted to read:

CHAPTER 961

DEAF AND HEARING IMPAIRED PERSONS

§ 3601. General provisions

1. **Definitions.** As used in this chapter, unless the context otherwise indicates, the following terms shall have the following meanings.

A. **“Department”** means the Department of Human Services.

B. **“Telephone relay service”** means a service transmitting messages and information between a person using standard telephone equipment for spoken communications and a deaf or hearing impaired person using teletypewriter equipment in conjunction with standard telephone equipment for communications in a written form.

C. **“Teletypewriter”** means a teletypewriter and other telecommunications equipment used by deaf and hearing impaired people to conduct telephone communications.

D. **“Teletypewriter system”** means the network of teletypewriter equipment used for telephone communications to or by deaf or hearing impaired persons who must rely on teletypewriter equipment in order to engage in telephone communications.

2. **Telephone relay services.** The Department of Human Services shall administer a statewide program to provide telephone relay services for deaf and hearing impaired persons who must rely on teletypewriter equipment for telephone communications. The program shall, to the extent possible, provide for 24-hour emergency relay services.

3. **Teletypewriter system.** The department shall consult with appropriate agencies and organizations serving the deaf community concerning the needs of the teletypewriter system. To the extent that funds are available, the department shall take such steps as may be necessary to preserve and maintain a viable teletypewriter system for use by the deaf population in Maine, including, but not limited to, providing for repair services and equipment for loaning to persons whose teletypewriter equipment is being repaired.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this Act shall take effect when approved.

STATEMENT OF FACT

The purpose of this bill is reflected in the emergency preamble.