

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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116th MAINE LEGISLATURE

FIRST REGULAR SESSION-1993

Legislative Document

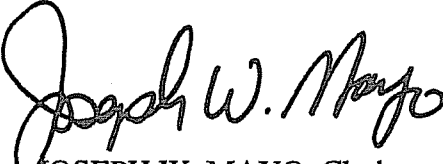
No. 1056

H.P. 783

House of Representatives, March 29, 1993

**An Act to Expand the Use of Telecommunications by Hearing-impaired
and Speech-impaired Customers.**

Reference to the Committee on Utilities suggested and ordered printed.


JOSEPH W. MAYO, Clerk

Presented by Representative CLARK of Millinocket.
Cosponsored by Representatives: ADAMS of Portland, AIKMAN of Poland, CASHMAN of
Old Town, HOLT of Bath, MORRISON of Bangor, Senators: CLEVELAND of Androscoggin,
VOSE of Washington.

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

2
3 **Sec. 1. 35-A MRSA §7302**, as amended by PL 1989, c. 66, is
4 further amended to read:

6 **§7302. Toll-call rates for deaf, hard-of-hearing or**
7 **speech-impaired persons**

8
9 **1. Rate reduction.** The commission shall establish a 70%
10 rate reduction for intrastate toll calls made on lines, or via
11 credit cards assigned to lines, used for making calls to and from
12 certified deaf, hearing--impaired--and--speech--impaired
13 hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons who must rely on
14 teletypewriters for residential telephone communications. In
15 addition, the 70% rate reduction must apply to all calls using
16 the state telecommunications relay service. This reduction shall
17 must also apply to intrastate toll calls made by agencies,
18 certified by the Division of Deafness in the Department of Human
19 Services as eligible to receive a discount, while providing vocal
20 relay services to deaf, hearing--impaired--and--speech--impaired
21 hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons, as well as to
22 community service centers serving deaf, hearing--impaired--and
23 speech--impaired hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired persons,
24 certified by the Division of Deafness of the Department of Human
25 Services as eligible to receive a discount. The costs incurred
26 by a telephone company under this subsection are just and
27 reasonable expenses for rate-making purposes.

28
29 **2. Customers qualifying for the reduction.** To qualify for
30 the reduction, a customer must file an affidavit, on a form
31 approved by the Department of Human Services, Division of
32 Deafness, with the telephone utility, stating that, due to
33 deafness or, hearing impairment or speech impairment, he the
34 customer or a member of the household must rely on a
35 teletypewriter for telephone communications, and that the
36 equipment is connected or acoustically coupled to his the
37 customer's telephone.

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40 **STATEMENT OF FACT**

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42 This bill eliminates the existing disincentive to make
43 telephone calls to the deaf or to a person that is
44 hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired and therefore must rely on a
45 teletypewriter. By permitting calls to the hard-of-hearing to
46 qualify for a toll discount, Maine will join the majority of
47 other states where a discount is available for calls made to the
48 deaf or hard-of-hearing. The bill also enables certified deaf
49 users of the vocal relay service to take advantage of the toll
50 discount when making credit-card calls. This bill adopts a

2 recent recommendation of the Telecommunications Relay Services
Advisory Council, established under the Maine Revised Statutes,
Title 35-A, section 8704. This bill also incorporates
4 recommendations by the advisory council concerning the
appropriate words to use when referring to the "hard-of-hearing."