
HOUSE FISCAL ADVISORY STAFF

TO: House Finance Subcommittee on Human Services
FROM: House Fiscal Advisory Staff
RE: Dual Party Phone Relay Service Fund
DATE: March 19, 2026

At the March 11, 2026, Health and Human Services Subcommittee hearing on the Governor’s FY 2027 budget for the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Chair Tanzi asked the staff for the current balance of the Dual Party Phone Relay Service Fund and its uses.

The Dual Party Phone Relay Service allows people with hearing or speech disabilities to communicate over the telephone using transcription technologies and translators. The Public Utilities Commission collects a nine-cent monthly surcharge from telecommunications service providers to manage the relay service. The Governor’s FY 2026 and FY 2027 recommendations each include \$168,415 for the contracted operation of the service in the Public Utilities Commission’s budget.

Additionally, in accordance with Rhode Island General Law, Section 39-1-42, the Commission annually remits \$100,000 to the Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing for the Emergency and Public Communication Access Program. It also transfers \$50,000 to the Department of Human Services for a telephone access to the text of newspaper program and the Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program.

The Dual Party Phone Relay Service Fund ended FY 2025 with a balance of \$994,725. The account generates about \$251,090 in revenues each fiscal year. The following table displays the FY 2025 actual spending and anticipated receipts and spending in the Governor’s recommended budget for FY 2026 and FY 2027.

Dual Party Phone Relay Service	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
Fund Balance	Actual	Gov. Rev.	Governor
Balance From Prior Year	\$ 960,113	\$ 994,725	\$ 927,400
New Receipts*	251,090	251,090	251,090
Total Available	\$ 1,211,203	\$ 1,245,815	\$ 1,178,490
Public Utilities Commission	\$ 66,478	\$ 168,415	\$ 168,415
CDHH Transfer	100,000	100,000	100,000
DHS Transfer	50,000	50,000	50,000
Balance Forward	\$ 994,725	\$ 927,400	\$ 860,075

**Based on FY 2025 receipts*

In FY 2025, the Public Utilities Commission spent \$66,478 for a contract with Hamilton Relay to operate the relay service. The Commission on the Deaf and Hard of Hearing spent \$48,943, including \$39,382 for interpreter and captioning referral services and \$9,541 for office supplies to support the services.

The Department of Human Services used the \$50,000 for the loan program and a subscription to a newspaper program in FY 2025. These two programs cost a total of \$204,684, with the remaining \$154,684 coming from general revenues.

cc: Honorable Marvin L. Abney, Chairman, House Finance Committee