

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH LEGISLATURE - FIRST SESSION - 2019
COMMITTEE STATEMENT
LB641

Hearing Date: Tuesday February 19, 2019
Committee On: Transportation and Telecommunications
Introducer: McDonnell
One Liner: Provide for grants under the Telecommunication Relay System Act for a 211 Information and Referral Network

Roll Call Vote - Final Committee Action:
Advanced to General File with amendment(s)

Vote Results:

Aye: 8 Senators Albrecht, Bostelman, Cavanaugh, DeBoer, Friesen, Geist, Hilgers, Hughes

Nay:

Absent:

Present Not Voting:

Oral Testimony:

Proponents:

Senator Mike McDonnell
Mary Ridder
Pamela Schwalb
Lindsay Paulsen
Karen Rathke
Stephen Kaniewski

Representing:

Introducer
NE Public Service Commission
United Way of the Midlands
United Way of the Midlands
Heartland United Way
Valmont Industries

Opponents:

Michelle Weber

Representing:

NE Advocacy Group

Neutral:

Paul W. Johnson

Representing:

Douglas County Emergency Management Committee

Summary of purpose and/or changes:

LB 641 would amend provisions relating to telecommunications and specifically to the Telecommunications Relay System (TRS). It would set aside a minimum of \$300,000 per year from the surcharge approved by the Public Service Commission for the Telecommunications Relay system to fund grants for 211 Information and Referral Networks. As defined in Section 4 of the bill, Information and Referral Network means a statewide information and referral network providing information to the public regarding health and human services provided by public and private entities throughout the state.

Section 6 would amend Section 86-313 relating to the surcharge. The statutory maximum surcharge is 20 cents per month on each telephone number, including wireless telephones, to support the TRS. The amendment would require the PSC to include in its surcharge an amount sufficient to provide a grant of at least \$300,000 for the 211 Network.

Section 7 is new language relating to grant applications and grant eligibility for the new 211 money. Subsection (2) relates to grant eligibility requirements for 211 Networks. Subsection (3) relates to how the money may be used.

Explanation of amendments:

The committee considered and adopted an amendment which accomplishes the following:

The amendment substitutes for the bill and makes the following changes. First, it expands the definition of 211 Information and Referral Network to require the network to provide information to the public regarding disaster and emergency response in addition to information regarding health and human services.

Second, the amendment removes all references to statutes relative to the Telecommunications Relay System and fees to be generated from telecommunications services and instead provides for a \$300,000 transfer for the next two fiscal years from the Nebraska Health Care Cash Fund to the PSC. As the bill was introduced, the funds would have come from a surcharge on wired and wireless telecommunications devices. The amendment would require each grant to a Network shall be in the amount of \$300,000.

Curt Friesen, Chairperson