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For immediate release

News Release

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PSC Approves Hearing Aid Distribution Program Established By The General Assembly Through House Bill 655

ATLANTA, August 7, 2007—Today, the Georgia Public Service Commission unanimously approved a plan to implement the provisions of HB 655 that allow the distribution of hearing aids to lower income Georgians. This bill, sponsored by Rep. Bob Smith (R-Watkinsville), added “other hearing technology” to the list of acceptable uses of the Telecommunications Relay Fund (TRS), which already included relay service, reading services for the blind, and distribution of telecommunications equipment.

The Commission will be contracting with Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation, a nonprofit organization that has provided hearing aids to low-income Georgians for over 30 years. The Foundation currently partners with two hearing aid manufacturers and maintains a network of over 75 audiologists throughout the state.

On November 1, 2007, this program will begin funding hearing aids for up to 880 low-income Georgia residents at an annual cost of \$504,000. According to the program guidelines:

- Applicants' income must not exceed 200% of the federal poverty guideline ;
- Applicants must be a Georgia resident for at least a year;
- Applicants must present a recommendation from a licensed audiologist;
- Applicant must sign an agreement (covering maintenance and repair issues);
- Hearing aids will only be dispensed through a state-licensed hearing care provider to persons 18 years of age or older, as Georgia Medicaid provides hearing aids for those under 18 years of age.

For more information about the Georgia Lions Lighthouse Foundation, go to: www.lionslighthouse.org or call 404-325-3630 and 800-718-7483 outside metro Atlanta.

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