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### PRESS RELEASE

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### **PEOPLE'S COUNSEL ASKS MARYLAND PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION TO INVESTIGATE CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ABOUT VERIZON MARYLAND'S PRACTICES CONCERNING MIGRATION OF CUSTOMERS TO FIBER NETWORK AND MAINTENANCE OF COPPER NETWORK FOR PHONE SERVICE**

(January 13, 2017) --- The Maryland Office of People's Counsel ("OPC") petitioned the Maryland Public Service Commission ("Commission") today asking for an investigation into Verizon Maryland's ("Verizon") provision of basic telephone service to Maryland customers, which is regulated by the Commission.

OPC and its expert telecommunications consultant have reviewed over 1,200 Verizon consumer complaints filed with the PSC and other government agencies over the past several years. These complaints have a consistent theme of complaints about delays or failure to repair the traditional copper-based network used for basic telephone service. In those parts of the State with a fiber network, consumers have lodged numerous complaints about Verizon's practices in transition, or "migrating," customers from the copper network to a fiber-network. These complaints are similar in kind to complaints made in other Verizon states such as Pennsylvania and New York. Verizon has not deployed its fiber network (over which it also offers its unregulated FiOS bundled

services) in significant portions of Maryland, including Baltimore City, Prince George's County, Western Maryland and the Eastern Shore. OPC is concerned that the rights of Maryland's telephone customers to basic, reliable telephone voice service are not being adequately met.

“This is not a question of challenging the ongoing transition to new technologies, where they are available,” said People's Counsel Paula M. Carmody. “However, consumers are entitled to good quality service subject to regulatory oversight. Failure to maintain the existing copper system, or to handle the transition of customers from a copper to a fiber network in a fair and customer-friendly manner, is not right. In half of our state, there is no fiber network to transition to, and consumers are complaining about chronic service problems, including deadlines, hum and static, and having difficulty getting those addressed. In parts of the state where Verizon does have a fiber network, consumers have complained about Verizon's practices moving them to a fiber network prematurely and even migrating them to unregulated digital voice service or wireless voice service without their consent. It's not right. Verizon is still a regulated phone company, and many consumers rely on basic phone service in their homes.

“The number and similarity of the consumer complaints show that these are not just isolated incidents,” Ms. Carmody added. “Consumer complaints are just a tip of the iceberg – think of all the people who do not come forward but merely accept poor service. The consumer complaints we reviewed are similar to those in other Verizon states, and indicate a pattern of neglecting the existing copper system . We want to make sure the Commission holds Verizon to its obligations to provide good quality service, whatever the network.”

*The Maryland Office of the People's Counsel is an independent state agency which represents residential consumers of regulated utility services including electric, gas, telecommunications, and water services, before the Maryland Public Service Commission, other state and federal agencies and the Courts.*

xxxx End of OPC Press Release xxxx