The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office for Administration and Finance
Information Technology Division

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MITT ROMNEY
Governor

KERRY HEALEY
LIEUTENANT Governor

THOMAS H. TRIMARCO
Secretary

T. LOUIS GUTIERREZ
Chief Information Officer

August 23, 2006

Dear Recipient:

On January 13, 2006, Thomas Trimarco, Secretary of the Executive Office for Administration and Finance, wrote to you in response to concerns raised by the community of people with disabilities regarding the Information Technology Division (ITD)'s intention to move the Commonwealth's Executive Department to an Open Document Format (ODF) standard. Secretary Trimarco promised that, if by mid-2006 no accessible application supported ODF, ITD would adjust the January 1, 2007 implementation date for adoption of that standard. On Secretary Trimarco's behalf, I am writing this letter to follow up on his commitment.

I am pleased to report that technology that was unavailable at the time that Secretary Trimarco wrote to you is under development, and upon public release and validation will enable ITD to meet the goal of implementing ODF while maintaining current levels of accessibility.

Earlier this year, alternative ODF-supporting office suites were being considered by ITD. The accessibility of these applications, and their ability to work with assistive technology, has improved steadily. Over time these suites will improve the options available to people with disabilities. However, it is our judgment that they are unlikely to be fully supported by assistive technology vendors, or alternatively to include fully functional adaptations in the packaged product, by January 1, 2007, the original target date for ODF implementation.

But promising new projects are underway this year to create translator software that will enable the Microsoft Office suite to translate documents from Microsoft formats to ODF and vice versa. Upon public release and validation, these tools will enable Executive Department agencies to begin implementing ODF while leveraging the installed base of Microsoft Office and available assistive technologies. We anticipate one or more of these projects to allow ODF adoption to commence before January 1, 2007.

Specifically, we plan to implement ODF, using translator technology plugged in to Microsoft Office, in a group of early adopter agencies, including the Massachusetts Office on Disability, by January 1, 2007. Thereafter, we plan to migrate all Executive Department agencies to compliance with the standard, in phases, by June of 2007. These target dates are not set in stone; they are dependent on a number of factors, including the adoption by the OASIS standard setting organization of ODF Version 1.1 (which will address minor accessibility issues related to the format itself), the timely delivery of completed translators by one or more of the multiple vendors that are currently developing this technology, and the validated accessibility of the translators themselves. In order to meet our implementation timetable, the Commonwealth requires

delivery of a translator suitable for use by early adopters by November of this year. At each stage of this implementation, accessibility will be our first priority.

When the alternative, ODF-supporting office suites become more accessible in the future, they too will provide a means by which the Executive Department can meet its long-term goal of implementing open document standards.

ITD intends to revise the Enterprise Technical Reference Model (ETRM) Version 3.5 so that its language is consistent with the implementation process described in this letter. We further plan to review the ETRM every six months thereafter to take into account changes in information technology, evolving standards, and new accessibility concerns, any one of which may warrant changes to the ETRM.

This approach to ODF implementation will fulfill our legal and moral obligations to the community of people with disabilities, acknowledges the practical requirements of implementation, and enables the Executive Department to continue to pursue the benefits of using open standards for information technology. The successful adoption of ODF next year will not be the end of the story, but an early step in our multi-year journey towards a service-oriented architecture.

I want to assure you that ITD has heard your concerns, and that the Administration is committed to addressing them. The law and simple justice require that people with disabilities have equal access to public sector information technology. By putting accessibility first among the priorities for ODF implementation, we are signaling a deeper commitment to accessibility for all future information technology projects undertaken by ITD and Executive Department agencies.

Integral to this direction are two other key initiatives. I am pleased to report the initiation of a new accessibility group within ITD headed by Joe Lazzaro and the execution of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) by ITD, the Massachusetts Office on Disability, and the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The MOU memorializes our understanding that the goals of the Commonwealth's efforts in this area should be the accessibility and usability of technology and the transition to new or upgraded systems that are as seamless for people with disabilities as they are for people without disabilities. I encourage you to read the entire MOU posted on ITD's web site at www.mass.gov/itd (click on the Accessibility Memorandum of Understanding link under "News").

Should you have any questions about these matters, please contact me at Louis.Gutierrez@state.ma.us.

Sincerely,

Louis Gutierrez
Chief Information Officer
Information Technology Division