Written Testimony in Support of the Commonwealth's ITD ETRM and Open Standards Policy provided by Kirk M. Klasson, VP of Strategy, on behalf of Novell, Inc.

October 28, 2005

Provided to the Committee Chair and Membership of the Post Audit and Oversight Committee of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts:

We would like to begin by thanking the Committee for providing Novell this opportunity to express our opinion on the process that the Commonwealth has pursued with respect to the formation of the Enterprise Technical Reference Model and the selection of the Open Document Format.

Novell, a Massachusetts based company that designs, develops and services both proprietary and open source software solutions, strongly supports the approach taken by the Commonwealth in its specification of its Enterprise Technical Reference Model (ETRM) and in the selection and specification of the Open Document Format as the standard for documents and public records. In our opinion, the approach and process the Commonwealth has undertaken has been open, collaborative and inclusive, incorporating the feedback and insights of vendors, users and the broader technology community at large. From the very beginning the Commonwealth has acted with complete transparency and good faith in communicating its objectives and soliciting participation in this process.

We base our support on over 20 years of experience in the development of technology based standards and software products that promote the interoperability of solutions and in working with private and public institutions to help them reap the benefits of practical, cost effective use of information technologies.

In our experience, the principles outlined in the vision for the Commonwealth's Enterprise Technical Reference Model including ease of integration, interoperability, reuse, flexibility and expanding the pool of potential alternative solutions are consistent with the best practices that we see in both private and public organizations. Similarly, the conceptual architecture the Commonwealth has proposed is appropriately abstracted and the specified component domains adequately articulated for purposes of practical implementation. Finally, the role of open standards in support of the specified domains and in realizing the vision outlined in the ETRM are consistent with best practices currently pursued by both industry and government users of information technology.

We strongly endorse the selection of open standards as a criterion for the fulfillment of the Commonwealth's Enterprise Technical Reference Model. There is a preponderance of evidence dating back to the issuance of the GOSIP (Government Open Systems Interconnection Profile) standards, that the public sector endorsement of an open standard, leads to better solutions, at lower total costs while invigorating innovation and incentivizing competition. If it weren't for the GOSIP policy that promoted interoperability of networking over proprietary alternatives there is a significant probability that the internet, as we know it today, would have failed, or worse would have

become the property of a sole commercial proprietor whose ability to extract economic gains over public good would have been unbounded. That same logic applies today.

Standards such as XML and HTTP promulgated by independent organizations such as the IETF and the W3C have given us the world wide web and at the same time democratized access to information at costs that proprietary solutions couldn't begin to approach. We believe the selection of the Open Document Format as specified by OASIS will have a similar impact on the industry. It will promote rather than prohibit interoperability, increase rather than diminish competition and spark innovation in areas such as text to voice where users can experience heretofore undefined benefits. Since this standard is new, it has yet to be fully incorporated by a broader eco-system of office applications and desktop technologies but all evidence suggests that this is inevitable. Currently, there are at least eight different solutions that support or are committed to supporting the Open Document Format. These solutions include features that address the needs of many different users. They include the ability to work with different document types, provide user instructions in multiple languages and support programs and technology devices to assist users with disabilities. Existing application environments which support ODF also support Braille terminals, alternative pointing devices and screen readers. These solutions are available from some of the most recognizable names in the information industry including IBM, Google, SUN and Novell. Others will follow and as they do the cost of technology will decline and the availability of access supporting all constituencies regardless of language, location or ability will proliferate.

The selection of an open standard, one that is subject to public inspection and contribution, peer review and evolution and unencumbered by property rights, is, without reservation or exception, the most sound decision that the Commonwealth could make with respect to the selection of a perpetual, technology based format for public documents.

Finally, our conviction in this assessment lies not only in our experience in the industry and market at large but in our internal use of technology as well. About a year ago Novell made the decision to employ standards based, open sourced technology as its primary document management facility. This led to the selection and implementation of Open Office, the same freely available software solution which will be one of the first to incorporate the Open Document Format. Like any organization that decides to move from a proprietary technology to an open one we experienced our own learning curve. However, since we have embarked on this course we have found that the ability to use this solution to be largely intuitive, its translation of documents from proprietary formats to be robust and the number of users who subscribe to this option to be constantly growing. As for costs, we anticipate that we will save approximately $900k per year in license fees for a population of approximately 5,900 employees or about $150 per user per year over proprietary alternatives. While our use of these technologies may vary from those of the Commonwealth, given that the useful life of this decision will last for years, we anticipate securing these savings for the foreseeable future.

In conclusion, based on our knowledge of software technology and standards and our participation in the process that has led to the creation of the Commonwealth's ETRM, we believe the selection of the Open Document Format to be a sound and practical decision that will benefit the Commonwealth for years to come.

Novell would like to thank the Committee for this opportunity to express our point of view with respect to this issue and would gladly augment this statement by answering any specific questions that the Committee would like to put to us.