



NO-COST CALLS FOR INCARCERATED PEOPLE

[S. 1559](#), SEN. CREEM,
[H. 1900](#), REP. TYLER_

DESCRIPTION

PLS is asking your support for a bill that would provide telephone calls for no cost to incarcerated people at all state prisons and county jails and houses of correction. **An Act Relative to Inmate Telephone Calls would support family connections by eliminating charges for prison telephone calls.**

WHY THIS MATTERS



Right now, families are charged exorbitant fees to maintain vital connections with their loved ones. This regressive taxation on the most vulnerable communities in the Commonwealth must end. Sheriffs have claimed that they need the revenues from telephone calls to fund programming for incarcerated people, but these claims are wrongheaded.

First, families should not be a revenue source for prisons and jails. The well-documented over-policing of Massachusetts' Black and Brown neighborhoods, the criminalization of Black and Brown youth, and the disparate nature by which Black and Brown addiction is criminalized instead of addressed with treatment, have all been at the center of mass incarceration in the Commonwealth and nationally. While only 27 percent of the state's population is Black or Latinx, people of color make up more than 54 percent of the people imprisoned by the DOC. Black and Latinx children are respectively, nine and three times more likely than White children to have a parent in prison.

Forcing these communities to subsidize the cost of their loved ones incarceration causes them to have to make impossible decisions between paying for rent, groceries, transportation, and paying to say "I love you" or "Good night" over the phone to their loved one. Massachusetts families pay some \$24 million each year to connect with incarcerated loved ones; to do so, one in three of these families will go into debt.

Second, The Massachusetts Department of Correction (DOC) and county sheriffs maintain ever-increasing budgets, even as overall rates of incarceration steadily decline. However, spending on programming remains at most a meager four percent of the correctional budget.



Studies show that contact with loved ones promotes lower recidivism rates and successful reentry. The telephone is a lifeline for prisoners and their families, since prisons are often located in remote areas; the children of incarcerated men and women are particularly vulnerable. Prisoners and their families should not be forced to choose between the cost of utilities and the cost of a child speaking with their parent or relative.

IMPACT



An Act relative to inmate telephone calls/An Act relative to telephone service for inmates in all correctional and other penal institutions in the Commonwealth will:

- Provide calls at no cost to all prisoners in Massachusetts
- Ensure that other forms of communication that are used to supplement telephone calls, such as electronic communication and video calls, are also provided at no cost

CONTACT

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