

VOTE TO CONNECT MINNESOTA FAMILIES



WHAT WILL SF 4837 AND HF 4438 DO?

- Allow Minnesota residents to communicate with their incarcerated loved ones in state correctional facilities at no cost
- Prohibit the state from taking kickbacks from its prison telecom vendor
- Ensure reasonable access to communication services in state correctional facilities
- Protect in-person visits for Minnesota residents with incarcerated loved ones

Sen. Oumou
Verbeten
Rep. Agbaje

"There were times that my family really needed my emotional support, but I couldn't afford to give it to them. My daughter attempted suicide, and I had to use someone else's phone time, which would have gotten me punished if I was caught."

— Jennifer M., formerly incarcerated Minnesota mother

\$1.7M+ → **\$700,000**

Annual spending by families on communication

DOC charges \$0.40 per email to message an incarcerated loved one, and \$0.23 per minute to have a video call. The DOC collects about \$19,000 in annual commissions due to the purchase of these services.

Annual cost to state of making communication free

Providing free communication to confined people is a cost-effective program that promotes rehabilitation.

SUPPORT CONNECTING FAMILIES BECAUSE...

- **1 in 3 families with an incarcerated loved one goes into debt** trying to pay predatory prison telecom vendors to maintain contact and 87% of the financial burden is borne by women.
- Every child deserves to hear "I love you" from their parent. Communication **mitigates the trauma suffered by the 1 in 28 children whose parents are incarcerated.**
- Communication with loved ones disrupts the toxicity of prisons and creates hope. When supported, incarcerated people are more committed to their own success and engaged in rehabilitative behaviors, which **decreases incidents in facilities and reduces recidivism, making officers and us all safer.**
- **No program is more accessible and effective at improving reentry success** than communication that strengthens relationships between incarcerated people and their support networks.
- The positive social and fiscal benefits associated with communication significantly outweigh its costs.



Contact Ivana Cortez (icortez@worthrises.org) with questions.

enabling healthy reentry



MINNESOTA FAMILIES ON THE COST OF PRISON CALLS

"I'd put twenty dollars on it at a time, which would last about a week, or a week and a day or two. I felt like I didn't want to help him anymore, because I was struggling out here to maintain that phone bill and had to keep paying for my household. It's hard enough when your partner is incarcerated – it is even harder on the relationship when you can't communicate regularly."

— Jennifer M.

"When my mom passed away, I tried to break up my three days of bereavement leave and accidentally broke the policy. I lost my job I ended up in the restricted living unite for 90 days, and I wasn't able to save any money for phone time." **— Josh B.**

"Having contact with the people we love and who love us is what keeps us human. We don't lose those basic needs while incarcerated... I can't tell you exactly how much its cost me financially over the years, but its literally thousands of dollars. I know its a predatory practice, but its our only option to be in touch with the outside world." **— Currently incarcerated person**

"Phone calls give us contact with the real world. It is easy to lose yourself in a prison environment. Calls keep me focused on the future and on the goal of leaving. My sister puts money on her phone so I can call her. When she doesn't have the money to do that, she feels bad." **— Currently incarcerated person**

"Having a loved one locked up costs enough – emotionally and mentally – it shouldn't cost us financially. I have spent hundreds of dollars for 15-minute phone calls, not to mention another few hundred on the fee's one has to pay just to add money. \$6.95 to \$9.95 fee added every time." **— Formerly incarcerated person**

"The phone helps keep my bond strong with my daughter. She is five. She can't read yet so I don't send her letters. She can answer a phone. I call every day to reassure her that we won't be separated forever, for her to know I'm coming home. It is very stressful for both of us when I don't have phone time." **— Jamie Gonzalez**

HELP CONNECT FAMILIES