



MINNESOTA SHERIFFS' ASSOCIATION

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April 3, 2024

Chair Ron Latz
Senator Oumou Verbeten
SF 4387

Dear Chair Latz and Senator Verbeten,

I am writing on behalf of the Minnesota Sheriffs' Association, representing the 87 elected Sheriffs from across our state, regarding our concerns surrounding the proposed bill to make phone calls free for incarcerated individuals in county jails.

It is clear that the short-term nature of detention in a local jail holds different impacts to families than that of a prison. Our elected sheriffs embrace their role in providing a safe and humane environment for those members of our communities who are incarcerated. This bill could serve to inhibit those goals.

One of the primary concerns we wish to address is the financial impact of this proposal. The funds collected from inmate phone calls are *crucial* for maintaining the operations of our county jail systems. These funds not only support the maintenance of the phone system but *also* directly contribute to covering other essential expenses, such as supplying incarcerated individuals with necessities like new mattresses, clothing, and pillows. Additionally, they play a significant role in funding programming initiatives and technology aimed at rehabilitation and reintegration. While we believe the intent of the bill is to support the incarcerated individuals, the actual outcomes could have very negative impacts to their actual experiences.

The potential loss of revenue resulting from free phone calls would have a profound trickle effect on county budgets. For example, for a county with a population of 250,000, the annual financial impact could potentially amount to as much as \$600,000. This includes both the lost revenue and the continued expenses required to maintain the jail facilities.

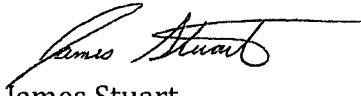
Furthermore, beyond the immediate financial implications, there are concerns about the long-term sustainability and effectiveness of our county jail systems. Without adequate funding from inmate phone calls, counties would face challenges in maintaining the quality of services and programs provided to incarcerated individuals.

This, in turn, could compromise public safety and the overall well-being of our communities.

In light of these considerations, we urge thorough deliberation on the proposed bill and its potential consequences. While we understand the importance of ensuring reasonable communication access for inmates, it is essential to carefully weigh this against the financial realities, operational needs, and negative impacts to our county jail systems and those incarcerated.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We are available to further discuss any concerns or questions you may have.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James Stuart", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

James Stuart
Executive Director