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S.F. No. 4387 – Prison and Security Hospital Phone Call and Other Communications Provisions

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The 2023 Legislature required all inmate phone calls from Department of Corrections (DOC) facilities to be free of charge and appropriated \$3.1 million annually to cover the cost. This bill makes all communication services (not just phones) free in both DOC facilities as well as Department of Human Services (DHS) direct care facilities.

Section 1, subdivision 1 requires that, to the extent that they are provided, voice and other communication services (emails, photos, videos) be provided to persons confined in DOC or DHS facilities free of charge.

Subd. 2 prohibits confined persons from violating a protection order, or other no-contact order while exercising their phone privilege.

Subd. 3 prohibits DOC and DHS from receiving revenue from the provision of phone or other communication services.

Subd. 4 prohibits a DOC or DHS facility from using video calls to replace a facility's in-person visitation program or be counted toward an in-person visitation limit.

Subd. 4a requires DOC and DHS to maximize purchasing power by consolidating contracts through a cooperative purchasing venture established by the Office of State Procurement.

Subd. 5 requires DOC to include the status of the agency's communication contracts and plans to consolidate the agency's communication contracts in its annual report. Requires an annual report of summary communication services statistics to the Legislature.

Subd. 6 defines "facility" for the purposes of the bill.

Section 2, subdivision 1 requires DHS to provide voice and other communications services free of charge, and prohibits the agency from including the cost of these services in the cost of care as defined under section 246.50 or 246B.01.

Subd. 2 provides that nothing in this section entitles a civilly committed person to communication services restricted under section 253B.03, subd. 3, or 253D.19.