



## Two Bills to Ensure Affordable Prison Telephone Rates

PLS is asking your support for two bills that would end outrageously high prison phone call rates. **An Act relative to inmate telephone calls (S. 1372)** would require that all prisoners be given free telephone calls. **An Act relative to telephone service for inmates in all correctional and other penal institutions in the Commonwealth (H. 3452) and An Act relative to inmate telephone call rates (S. 1430)** would require that prisons negotiate for the lowest price to consumers and end kickbacks that inflate rates.

S. 1372, Sen. Brownsberger  
S. 1430, Sen. Montigny & H. 3452, Rep. Tyler

### 2019-2020 legislative session

While Massachusetts state prisons offer phone calls for 10 or 11 cents per minute, county Houses of Correction and jails are charging exorbitant fees to inmates and their families. Those in county custody have no choice but to use the phone provider selected by the facility. **A 15-minute phone can cost as much as \$6.15, or \$2,245 per year for daily calls – an expense borne by more than half of American families.** All too often, prisons and jails choose a provider based on the highest “site commission” offered, which is a kickback from the provider to the facility. **In 2018, Massachusetts prisons and jails combined made a reported \$9,000,000 in commissions by charging prisoners’ families and loved ones outrageous prices to talk to their incarcerated loved ones.** This profit includes the aforementioned commissions as well as other services, rent payments, and goods.

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

### **An Act relative to telephone service for inmates in all correctional and other penal institutions in the Commonwealth (H. 3452) and An Act relative to inmate telephone call rates (S. 1430) Will:**

- End commissions and other avenues of profit for the correctional institutions, which will lower rates charged in prisons and jails - as has happened in other states that have eliminated them.
- Require the facilities to choose contracts that provide the lowest price to the end consumer, the prisoners and their families.
- Take other steps to keep prison telephone rates low.

### **An Act relative to inmate telephone calls (S. 1372) Will:**

- Require free calls for all prisoners in Massachusetts
- While this would impose a cost on the state, with no commissions and no need to track and recover charges to consumer accounts, the state would be able to contract for a much lower rate than currently.

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