

Study on Communication Rates for Incarcerated Individuals

Report to the Legislature

Prepared for Washington State Office of Financial Management

Pursuant to Section 133(20), Chapter 376, Laws of 2024

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**CENTER FOR
ECONOMIC AND
BUSINESS RESEARCH**



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About this Report

Pursuant to Section 133(20), Chapter 376, Laws of 2024, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) contracted with Western Washington University's Center for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) to provide a comprehensive analysis of communication rates for incarcerated individuals across the United States. This report examines the costs associated with various communication methods — including voice calls, video conferencing, email, and text messaging — offered by contracted vendors in each state.

Included in the report is an overview of the payments made by each state to their communication vendors, outlining the rate structures applicable to incarcerated individuals and their families over time. Additionally, it presents data on the total amounts paid by families to vendors each fiscal year.

The report features a comparative analysis of rate structures over time, alongside historical communication fees. It also aims to forecast market trends from 2024 to 2030, providing insights into expected changes.

Furthermore, the report identifies states that offer any form of communication — whether voice, video, email, or text — free of charge to both the initiating and receiving parties. It includes specific dates when these states began offering free communication services. Additionally, the report examines any access limitations for incarcerated individuals to these services once they are provided free of charge, as well as how communication policies have evolved in these states as a result.

Statutory Language

Section 133(20), Chapter 376, Laws of 2024:

“(20) (a) \$20,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2024 and \$120,000 of the general fund-state appropriation for fiscal year 2025 are provided solely for the office to contract with a third party to complete market research on incarcerated individual communication rates in the United States. The market research must include:

- I. Detail by state on the amount each state pays to the vendor contracted to provide communication service rates and rate structures for incarcerated individuals at discrete points of time to include, at least, January 1, 2024, January 1, 2020, and January 1, 2015 for, at least but not limited to:
 - (A) Voice communication;*
 - (B) Video communication;*
 - (C) Email communication; and*
 - (D) Text messaging communication;**
- II. The amount families paid in total for a state’s contracted telecom vendor each state fiscal year for at least fiscal years 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021, 2022, and 2023;*
- III. Comparative market research analysis on rate structures over time, and how the market is anticipated to change by calendar year from calendar year 2024 through calendar year 2030;*
- IV. Analysis on how many states provide at least voice communication services or any other communication services free of charge to the person initiating and the person receiving the communication and what calendar date that began; and*
- V. Comparative analysis of any impacted rate structures, and at least those in (a) (i) of this subsection, before communication services are made free of charge to the person initiating and the person receiving the communication compared to the new negotiated rate structures, and at least those in (a) (I) of this subsection, after communication services are made free of charge to the person initiating and the person receiving the communication.*
- VI. The report must be submitted to the governor and the appropriate policy and fiscal committees of the legislature by December 31, 2024.”*

Introduction

The Center for Economic and Business Research (CEBR) was contracted by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) to satisfy a legislative mandate to do a comprehensive analysis of communication rates for incarcerated individuals across the United States. This evaluation involves collecting data on payments made by states as well as families of incarcerated individuals to telecommunications vendors.

This market research examines call rate structures for incarcerated individuals over the years. It tracks the evolution of these rate structures over time and compares them to general telecommunication fees. Additionally, the analysis works to project market trends from 2024 to 2030, considering the new telecommunications regulations for prisons and jails recently approved by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) in response to the Martha Wright-Reed Act.¹

The study also identifies states that provide at least some free voice communication services. It includes a comparative analysis of rate structures before and after the introduction of free communication services, assessing the impact of these changes on newly negotiated rate structures.

Key Findings

The key findings of this report include:

- Some states implementing no-cost calling for incarcerated individuals have seen significant increases in the rate of calls, and the change has also revealed challenges in meeting that higher demand.
- Incoming FCC regulations capping call rates will lower the cost burden on incarcerated individuals and their families. Time will tell how states adjust to the new ruling, but the drop in revenue may cause telecommunications providers to shift costs to the states to maintain their desired profit margins.
- This report has limitations in answering the question regarding how much more no-cost states are paying since making communication services free. There is not sufficient information to illustrate how much no-cost states are paying now and how much families were paying before the change.
- Washington State legislators can observe and learn from evolving policies in other states.
- An RFP (request for proposal) group can be established within states where policy analysts are able to access RFIs (request for information) between DOCs and vendors to track the economic development created by lower prison communication costs.

¹ Prison Policy Initiative, *FCC votes to slash prison and jail calling rates and ban corporate kickbacks* (2024)
<https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2024/07/18/fcc-vote/>

Data and Methodology

CEBR used two different approaches to collect data through public records requests (PRR). First, the Center sent PRRs to each state's Department of Corrections (DOC) or similarly functioning agency units for telecommunication contracts. The Center received 37 state contracts, but rate structures were often not included in these contracts. Next, a second round of PRRs was sent to each state specifically requesting charged rates (voice, video, email, and text) and total amounts paid by families from as early as 2015 to now.

While this was the most direct approach to data, it was not possible for the Center to obtain each state's telecom vendor contract or total expenditures due to the short time frame for the research and very long public records response times. Reference Table 6: Total amount paid by State (Aggregate), dollar amounts under Appendix A to see which states responded to this methodology.

Nonprofit and Other Partners

The most conclusive and accurate data was found through nonprofit groups that compile and present data on service rates within the U.S. prison telecommunications industry. Worth Rises, Prison Policy Initiative, Prison Phone Justice, and Ameelio have made valuable contributions to this study regarding the rates paid by incarcerated individuals and their families.

Worth Rises

Worth Rises is a non-profit based in New York. One of their main goals is to bring justice to the families who take on the debt from the prison and telecom industries "predatory" prices. Andrew Lama, a Government Affairs Specialist, acted as a primary source and shared his experiences connecting with Corrections facilities. The Center sourced 15-minute phone call rates from Worth Rises and calculated the per-minute rates by dividing the 15-minute call rates by 15.² Reference Table 1 in the report.

Prison Policy Initiative

The Prison Policy Initiative is a research and advocacy non-profit based in Massachusetts. Their members were unsatisfied with the lack of state and national level data available to the public, so their goal became to fill this gap to fight for criminal justice reform and against over-criminalization. This initiative contributed valuable data regarding the e-messaging rates found in Table 1 in addition to a relevant briefing that outlines the FCC's newest regulations on eliminating kickbacks or commission earned by DOCs.

Prison Phone Justice

The Prison Phone Justice campaign is a national campaign that provides the latest aggregate data on how much families are paying towards kickbacks. This campaign has been an integral part of convincing the FCC to ban all DOC commissions because of the quantitative data they produce. In Table 2 of this report, the Center utilized data including the total amounts families pay in kickbacks by state and what percentage of revenue from phone calls are turned into kickbacks.

Ameelio

Ameelio is the first and only technology nonprofit that offers incarcerated persons communication services (IPCS). They have already contracted with Iowa's DOC.³ The company was created to bring down communication services by developing in house services to decrease production costs.

² Worth Rises, *Prison and Jail Telecom Data* <https://connectfamiliesnow.com/data>

³ Ameelio (2020) <https://www.ameelio.org/about-us>

Rate Structure for Incarcerated Individuals

Table 1 displays the rates charged for one minute of phone calling, one minute of video calling, and email/e-message in different years. Overall, phone call rates have decreased over time. E-message rates were more consistent over time, with many states maintaining the same rate between 2016 and 2024. Other states increased their rates, and a few lowered their rates.

These rates are determined through a bargaining process between the vendor and the state. States essentially auction off the rights to a contract, as various vendors will offer plans from which the state picks. Each vendor is incentivized to offer a better plan than the others to increase the likelihood of being selected. The vendors are then put on a point scale with various weighted categories such as reliability and total revenue.

DOCs often pick contracts with the most profitable commission rates.⁴ These may not be the contracts with the highest rates, as the total number of calls decreases as price increases. It is also possible that the most profitable contract is not selected, depending on what else the vendors have to offer. The vendor ranked highest may not necessarily win the contract either, as there is a political factor at play as well.

Table 1: Rates charged for 1-minute phone calls, 1-minute video calls, and emails by state

State	One-Minute Call Rates ⁵			Email / e-message, Per Message Rates		One-Minute Video Call Rates (In-State)
	2015	2020	2024	2016 ⁶	2024	2024
Alabama	\$0.45	\$0.05	\$0.05	N/A	N/A	N/A
Alaska	\$0.25	\$0.07	\$0.14	\$0.43	N/A	N/A
Arizona	\$0.40	\$0.12	\$0.08	\$0.25	\$0.24 ⁷	\$0.03 ⁷
Arkansas	\$0.32	\$0.15	\$0.14	\$0.50	\$0.50 ⁸	\$0.43 ⁹
California	\$0.14	\$0.08	\$0.00	\$0.05	\$0.05 ¹⁰	\$0.01 ¹⁰
Colorado	\$0.25	\$0.11	\$0.01	\$0.34	\$0.38 ¹¹	\$0.40 ¹²
Connecticut	\$0.32	\$0.24	\$0.00	\$0.00	Free ¹³	\$0.00 ¹⁴
Delaware	\$0.21	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.25	N/A	N/A
Florida	\$0.14	\$0.04	\$0.14	\$0.39	\$0.40 ¹⁵	\$0.20 ¹⁵
Georgia	\$0.32	\$0.13	\$0.14	\$0.30	\$0.30 ¹⁶	\$0.13 ¹⁶
Hawaii	\$0.21	\$0.13	\$0.05	N/A	N/A	N/A

⁴ Worth Rises, Andrew Lama

⁵ CEBR calculations using Worth Rises Data

⁶ [SMH: The rapid and unregulated growth of e-messaging in prisons | Prison Policy Initiative](#)

⁷ [AZ DOC Inmate Services \(jpay.com\)](#)

⁸ [Arkansas Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](#)

⁹ [ADC Visitation and Visitation Updates - Arkansas Department of Corrections](#)

¹⁰ [California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation](#)

¹¹ [Colorado Department of Corrections](#)

¹² [Visit an Incarcerated Individual | Department of Corrections \(colorado.gov\)](#)

¹³ [Connecticut Public Radio](#)

¹⁴ [General Visiting Information \(ct.gov\)](#)

¹⁵ [Florida Department of Corrections, FL \(jpay.com\)](#)

¹⁶ [Georgia Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](#)

State	One-Minute Call Rates ⁵			Email / e-message, Per Message Rates		One-Minute Video Call Rates (In-State)
	2015	2020	2024	2016 ⁶	2024	2024
<i>Idaho</i>	\$0.25	\$0.08	\$0.08	\$0.35	\$0.35 ¹⁷	\$0.33 ¹⁷
<i>Illinois</i>	\$0.24	\$0.01	\$0.01	\$0.15	\$0.15 ¹⁸	\$0.16 ¹⁸
<i>Indiana</i>	\$0.24	\$0.24	\$0.14	\$0.27	N/A	\$0.33 ¹⁹
<i>Iowa</i>	\$0.21	\$0.11	\$0.11	\$0.25	N/A	N/A
<i>Kansas</i>	\$0.18	\$0.18	\$0.07	\$0.25	\$0.25	N/A
<i>Kentucky</i>	\$0.30	\$0.10	\$0.14	\$0.44	\$0.44 ²⁰	N/A
<i>Louisiana</i>	\$0.32	\$0.21	\$0.14	\$0.28	\$0.30 ²¹	\$0.25 ²¹
<i>Maine</i>	\$0.25	\$0.09	\$0.09	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Maryland</i>	\$0.36	\$0.03	\$0.03	N/A	N/A	\$0.00 ²²
<i>Massachusetts</i>	\$0.16	\$0.12	\$0.00	\$0.25	N/A	N/A
<i>Michigan</i>	\$0.13	\$0.16	\$0.07	\$0.23	\$0.25 ²³	\$0.16 ²⁴
<i>Minnesota</i>	\$0.43	\$0.05	\$0.00	\$0.40	\$0.40 ²⁵	\$0.23 ²⁶
<i>Mississippi</i>	\$0.38	\$0.04	\$0.02	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Missouri</i>	\$0.12	\$0.05	\$0.05	\$0.25	\$0.25 ²⁷	\$0.27 ²⁸
<i>Montana</i>	\$0.14	\$0.12	\$0.06	\$0.32	N/A	\$0.25 ²⁹
<i>Nebraska</i>	\$0.10	\$0.06	\$0.03	\$0.25	N/A	N/A
<i>Nevada</i>	\$0.20	\$0.11	\$0.11	\$0.30	\$0.30 ³⁰	N/A
<i>New Hampshire</i>	\$0.18	\$0.01	\$0.01	\$0.40	N/A	N/A
<i>New Jersey</i>	\$0.33	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.35	\$0.35 ³¹	\$0.33 ³²
<i>New Mexico</i>	\$0.04	\$0.08	\$0.08	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>New York</i>	\$0.05	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.18	\$0.14 ³³	N/A
<i>North Carolina</i>	\$0.23	\$0.10	\$0.10	\$0.25	N/A	N/A
<i>North Dakota</i>	\$0.40	\$0.08	\$0.08	\$0.32	N/A	N/A
<i>Ohio</i>	\$0.39	\$0.05	\$0.02	\$0.25	N/A	N/A

¹⁷ [Idaho Department of Correction \(jpay.com\)](http://idaho.gov/department-of-correction/jpay.com)

¹⁸ [LDOC Current and Proposed Rates.xlsx \(illinois.gov\)](http://illinois.gov/ldoc-current-and-proposed-rates.xlsx)

¹⁹ [ViaPath Visitor Web 8.0 \(gtlvisitme.com\)](http://gtlvisitme.com)

²⁰ [Kentucky Adult Institutions \(jpay.com\)](http://kentucky.gov/adult-institutions/jpay.com)

²¹ [Louisiana Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://louisiana.gov/department-of-corrections/jpay.com)

²² [DPSCS - Incarcerated Individual Visitation Services \(maryland.gov\)](http://maryland.gov/dpssc-incarcerated-individual-visitation-services)

²³ [Michigan Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://michigan.gov/department-of-corrections/jpay.com)

²⁴ [Video Visitation \(michigan.gov\)](http://michigan.gov/video-visitation)

²⁵ [Minnesota Department of Corrections](http://minnesota.gov/department-of-corrections)

²⁶ [Video Visitation / Department of Corrections \(mn.gov\)](http://mn.gov/video-visitation/department-of-corrections)

²⁷ [Missouri Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://missouri.gov/department-of-corrections/jpay.com)

²⁸ [Video Visits | Missouri Department of Corrections \(mo.gov\)](http://mo.gov/video-visits)

²⁹ [Staying Connected \(mt.gov\)](http://mt.gov/staying-connected)

³⁰ [Nevada Department of Corrections, NV Incarcerated individual Text, Email \(jailexchange.com\)](http://nevada.gov/department-of-corrections-nv-incarcerated-individual-text-email/jailexchange.com)

³¹ [New Jersey Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://nj.gov/new-jersey-department-of-corrections/jpay.com)

³² [Video Visitation \(nj.gov\)](http://nj.gov/video-visitation)

³³ [NYS DOCCS Inmate Services \(jpay.com\)](http://nys.gov/doocs-inmate-services/jpay.com)

State	One-Minute Call Rates ⁵			Email / e-message, Per Message Rates		One-Minute Video Call Rates (In-State)
	2015	2020	2024	2016 ⁶	2024	2024
<i>Oklahoma</i>	\$0.20	\$0.20	\$0.14	\$0.25	\$0.25 ³⁴	N/A
<i>Oregon</i>	\$0.16	\$0.09	\$0.09	\$0.25	\$0.25 ³⁵	\$0.22 ³⁶
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	\$0.42	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.25	N/A	\$0.00 ³⁷
<i>Rhode Island</i>	\$0.05	\$0.03	\$0.03	N/A	N/A	\$0.25 ³⁸
<i>South Carolina</i>	\$0.07	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.25	N/A	\$0.20 ³⁹
<i>South Dakota</i>	\$0.21	\$0.08	\$0.06	\$0.25	N/A	\$0.33 ⁴⁰
<i>Tennessee</i>	\$0.24	\$0.07	\$0.08	\$0.40	\$0.40 ⁴¹	\$0.33 ⁴²
<i>Texas</i>	\$0.26	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.45	\$0.47 ⁴³	\$0.17 ⁴⁴
<i>Utah</i>	\$0.31	\$0.10	\$0.10	N/A	N/A	\$0.00 ⁴⁵
<i>Vermont</i>	\$0.20	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.25	N/A	\$0.25 ⁴⁶
<i>Virginia</i>	\$0.40	\$0.04	\$0.04	\$0.32	\$0.32 ⁴⁷	\$0.25 ⁴⁸
<i>Washington</i>	\$0.23	\$0.11	\$0.05	\$0.25	\$0.25 ⁴⁹	\$0.27 ⁵⁰
<i>West Virginia</i>	\$0.26	\$0.03	\$0.04	N/A	N/A	N/A
<i>Wisconsin</i>	\$0.12	\$0.06	\$0.06	\$0.10	N/A	\$0.10 ⁵¹
<i>Wyoming</i>	\$0.25	\$0.11	\$0.11	N/A	N/A	N/A

³⁴ [Oklahoma Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://oklahoma.com)

³⁵ Andrew Lama Data 6004(1) Das 0510

³⁶ Andrew Lama Data 6004(1) Das 0510

³⁷ [Inmate Visitation | Department of Corrections | Commonwealth of Pennsylvania](http://inmatevisitation.com)

³⁸ Andrew Lama Data

³⁹ [FAQs Virtual Visitation.pdf \(sc.gov\)](http://sc.gov)

⁴⁰ [South Dakota Department of Corrections, SD Video Visitation \(jailexchange.com\)](http://jailexchange.com)

⁴¹ [Tennessee Department of Correction \(jpay.com\)](http://tennessee.com)

⁴² [Tennessee Department of Correction Video Visitation](http://tennessee.com)

⁴³ [Texas Department of Criminal Justice \(jpay.com\)](http://jpay.com)

⁴⁴ [TDCJ News - Visitation \(texas.gov\)](http://texas.gov)

⁴⁵ [Video-Visiting-Frequent-Asked-Questions.docx.pdf \(utah.gov\)](http://utah.gov)

⁴⁶ [Vermont Department of Corrections](http://vermont.com)

⁴⁷ [Virginia Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://jpay.com)

⁴⁸ [Video Visitation — Virginia Department of Corrections](http://virginia.com)

⁴⁹ [6021 SBR WM TA 24 \(wa.gov\)](http://wa.gov)

⁵⁰ [Washington State Department of Corrections \(jpay.com\)](http://jpay.com)

⁵¹ [Enhanced Video Visitation Service \(wi.gov\)](http://wi.gov)

Figure 1 shows 15-minute phone call rates by state. Illinois, Colorado, and New Hampshire had the cheapest phone call rates in 2024, charging \$0.14, \$0.18, and \$0.20 for 15-minute phone calls, respectively. Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oklahoma all charged the highest rate at \$2.10. Many of the higher-cost states are concentrated in the South and Midwest.

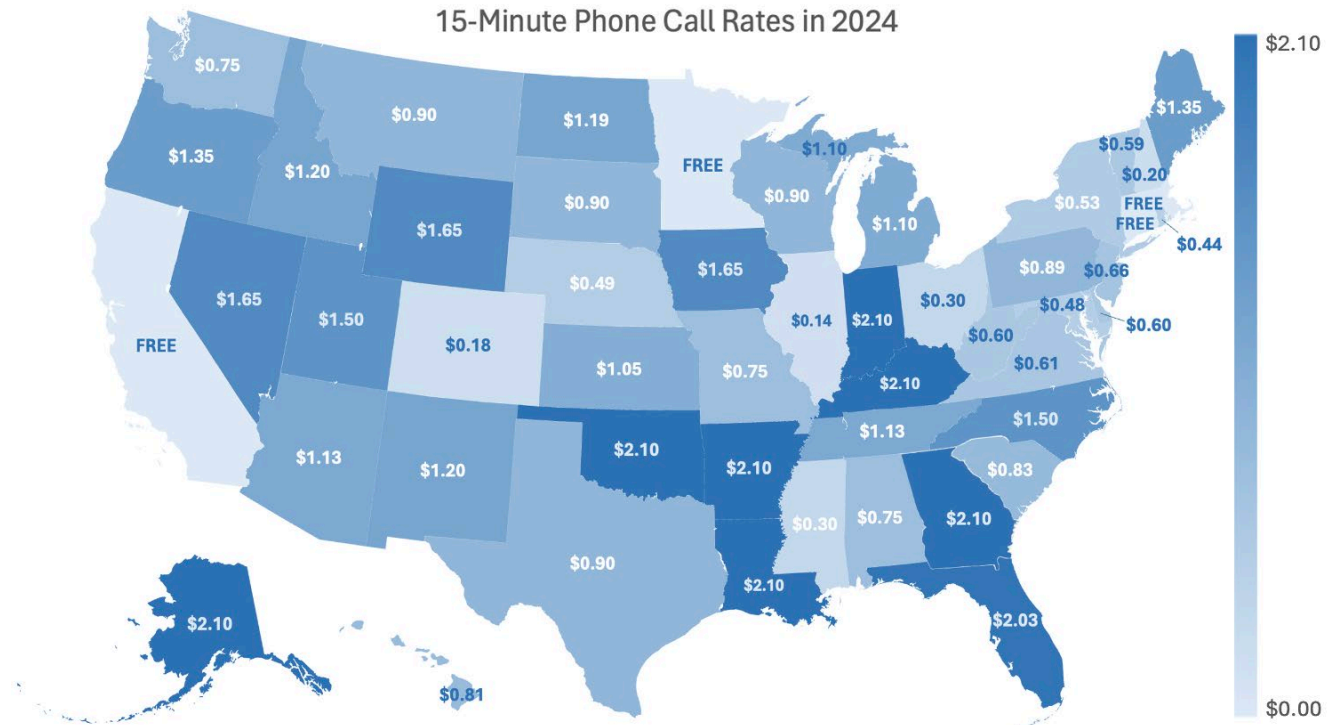


Figure 1: 15-minute phone call rates for incarcerated individuals in January 2024

Amount Families Paid to the Vendors in Total

After extensive online research and outreach to state DOCs, the Center was unable to obtain data on the total amount families paid to vendors. Vendor revenue figures are not publicly accessible, and despite outreach efforts which spanned all 50 states, the majority of respondents could not provide relevant data. Other agencies such as Worth Rises, Prison Policy Initiative, and Ameelio also did not provide the Center with sufficient data on this subject.

Further complicating our data collection is the 2024 FCC vote to place an outright ban on DOC commission collection on phone calls and install lower price caps for incarcerated people’s communication services (IPCS).⁵² (See page 17 for more information.) State DOCs have been forced to renegotiate contracts with their communications vendors in response to this act, ultimately changing the data on vendor revenue while the Center has been trying to collect it.

However, using commission data from the Prison Phone Justice, the Center was able to estimate the amount families paid to vendors in some states. Most state contracts follow a revenue sharing model in which prison communication vendors pay a commission, commonly referred to as a kickback, to the contracting government agency. This means that a portion of the revenue collected through prison communications is paid to the state by the vendor. According to a 2017 report by the nonprofit Prison Policy Initiative, “The average wage for most prison jobs is between \$0.14 and \$0.63 per hour. People held in local jails usually do not earn anything for work they do there. In seven states, prisoners receive no pay for their labor. Thus, the expense of prison and jail telecom services is primarily borne by prisoners’ families.”⁵³ This means we can assume that a majority of the commission payments are ultimately paid by prisoners’ families as well.

Prison Phone Justice was able to collect and publish some recent data on total commission amounts and commission percentages. The Center used this data to calculate the total amount that families paid to communication vendors in some states in recent years as shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Total commission paid by individuals⁵⁴

State	Time Frame	Total Commission Amount Paid by Individuals	Commission % of Vendor Revenue Paid to States	Estimated Total (based on commission percentages)
Arkansas	Through August 2019	\$2,504,327	74-80%	\$3,384,226 - \$3,130,409
Connecticut	Jan-Aug 2018	\$5,090,732	68-68.75%	\$7,486,371 - \$7,404,701
Florida	2012	\$5,156,269	N/A	N/A
Georgia	2018	\$8,062,201	59.6%	\$13,527,183
Idaho	Jan-Aug 2019	\$849,732	N/A	N/A
Indiana	2014	\$1,696,978	N/A	N/A
Maine	2012	\$367,232	60-100%	\$612,053 - \$367,232
Massachusetts	Jan-Oct 2018	\$2,388,146	76.2%	\$3,134,050
Michigan	Jan-Sept 2018	\$9,889,212	71.75-73.5%	\$13,782,874 - \$13,454,710

⁵² <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-404087A1.pdf>

⁵³ <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2024/oct/14/fcc-slashes-prison-and-jail-phone-rates-caps-video-call-cost-eliminates-site-commission-kickbacks/>

⁵⁴ CEBR calculations based on [Rates and Kickbacks | Prison Phone Justice](#)

State	Time Frame	Total Commission Amount Paid by Individuals	Commission % of Vendor Revenue Paid to States	Estimated Total (based on commission percentages)
Minnesota	Jan-July 2019	\$625,022	32.5-32.8%	\$1,923,145 - \$1,905,555
Mississippi	2017	\$42,000	0.6%	\$700,000
Missouri	Jan-Nov 2018	\$1,542,525	N/A	N/A
Nevada	2019-2021	\$5,000,000	N/A	N/A
New Hampshire	2017	\$360,000	0.2%	\$180,00,000
North Dakota	2012	\$97,856	40%	\$244,640
Ohio	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Oklahoma	2012	\$1,017,658	N/A	N/A
Oregon	2013	\$3,000,000	N/A	N/A
Pennsylvania	2012	\$3,470,852	59-60%	\$5,882,800 - \$5,784,753
South Dakota	2014	\$454,361	33-38%	\$1,376,852 - \$1,195,687
Tennessee	Oct 2018-Dec 2019	\$4,080,000	N/A	N/A
Texas	2012	\$6,760,593	0.4%	\$169,014,825
Vermont	2017	\$165,697	N/A	N/A
West Virginia	2019	N/A	0.001%	N/A
Wyoming	2017	\$63,283	N/A	N/A

Comparative Market Analysis

This section of the report presents a comparative market analysis that addresses changes in rate structures over time, a comparison of incarcerated telecommunications fees and telecommunication fees for the general public, and an analysis of anticipated market changes and trends from 2024 to 2030.

Phone Call Rate Structure Over Time

Figure 2 illustrates phone call rate structures over time for all states. In 2015, the 15-minute call rates for incarcerated individuals were far higher than today. By 2020, these rates had significantly decreased, with far less drastic change occurring from 2020-2024.

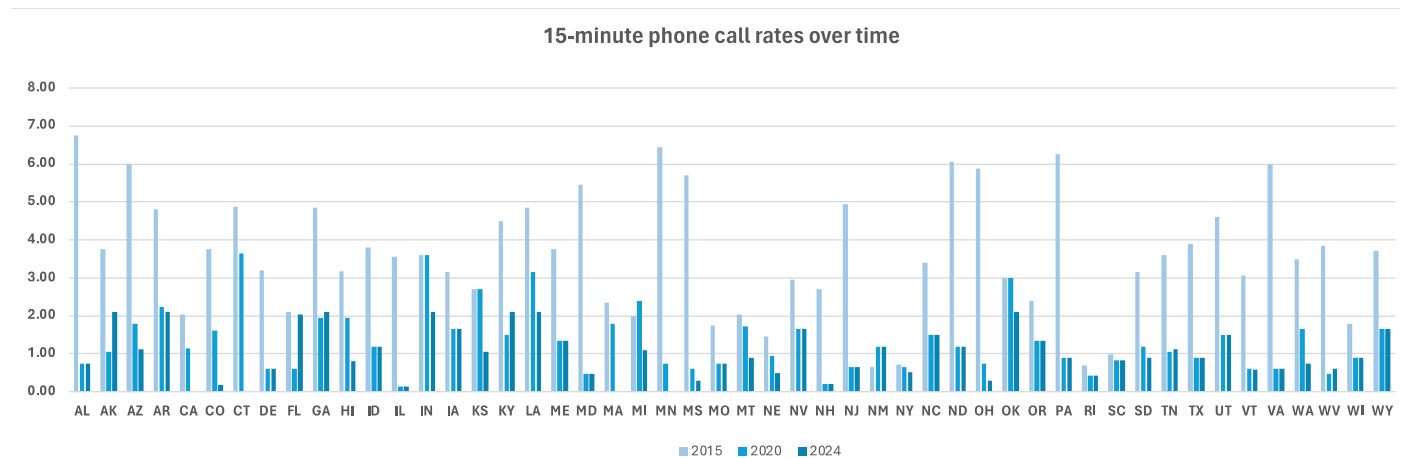


Figure 2: 15-minute phone call rates over time

Figure 3 further breaks down the change in rates over time. In 2015, the highest rate charged in any state was \$6.75 in Alabama. In 2020, Connecticut charged the most at \$3.65, and in 2024, seven states charged the highest value of \$2.10, which is also the rate cap set by the FCC. The minimum and average rates have also decreased over time.

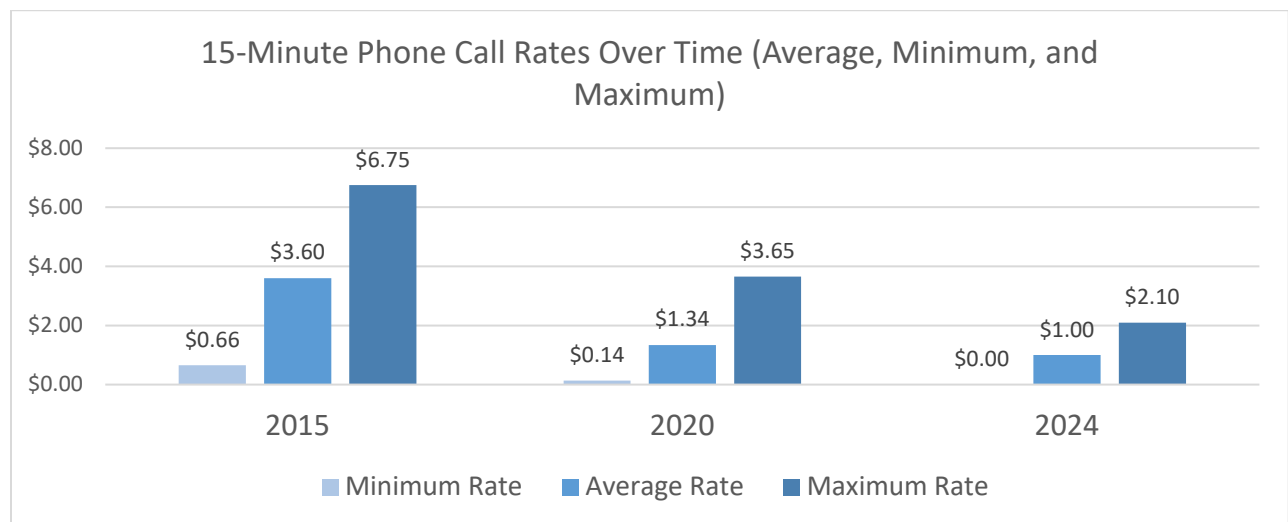


Figure 3: Minimum, median, and maximum 15-minute phone call rates over time

Rates for Incarcerated Individuals Compared to General Telecommunication Fees

When compared to rates offered to the general consuming public, prison phone call rates are often far higher. Figure 4 shows the 1-minute phone call cost faced by a U.S. consumer, compared to the minimum and maximum that incarcerated individuals face.⁵⁵ This analysis is challenged by the fact that most Americans no longer pay for calls by the minute due to cell phone plans that offer either a large number of monthly minutes or even unlimited minutes for nationwide calling.

To analyze the difference in rates, we took a variety of providers' total plan cost, added the per month cost of a phone, and divided it by the total phone call minutes offered by the plan. This gives us the cost of a minute of phone calling, given the cost of the plan and phone itself. The per month cost of owning a phone was found by dividing the average cost of a cell phone⁵⁶ by the average lifetime of a cell phone in years⁵⁷, then further divided by 12 to get the cost of having a cell phone for a month. As modern standard plans offer unlimited phone calling and additional data, the number of phone call minutes possible under each plan was calculated using a standard assumption that each minute of phone calling uses 0.75 MB of data⁵⁸. Thus, the following equation shows the estimated per minute cost of a standard plan which includes allotted data.

$$\frac{\text{Plan Cost} + \text{Average Monthly Cellphone Cost}}{\frac{\text{Gigabytes}}{.00075}}$$

Some inaccuracy may be possible with this comparison, as the model of phone plans vary dramatically between what is offered to the general public and incarcerated individuals. For example, incarcerated individuals do not have 24/7 access to phone calling or a mobile phone, nor do they have the same features that a mobile phone would provide such as unrestricted internet access.

Figure 4 also shows the minimum per-minute phone call rate paid by incarcerated individuals in the U.S. (excluding those in states with free calling), the median phone call rate paid by incarcerated individuals, and the highest phone call rate paid by incarcerated individuals. As the figure illustrates, even the minimum phone call rates for incarcerated individuals are significantly higher than rates for the general public. The five plans were chosen from popular providers to represent a wide range of prices and data availability.

⁵⁵Telecommunication prices for the general public may not be consistent across all regions of the U.S. Prices used above have been found on provider websites.

⁵⁶<https://canalys.com/newsroom/north-america-smartphone-market-Q1-2023>

⁵⁷[Estimating the generation of household e-waste in municipalities using primary data from surveys: A case study of Sao Jose dos Campos, Brazil - ScienceDirect](#)

⁵⁸Lifewire, How Many Megabytes for One Minute of Conversation? (lifewire.com)

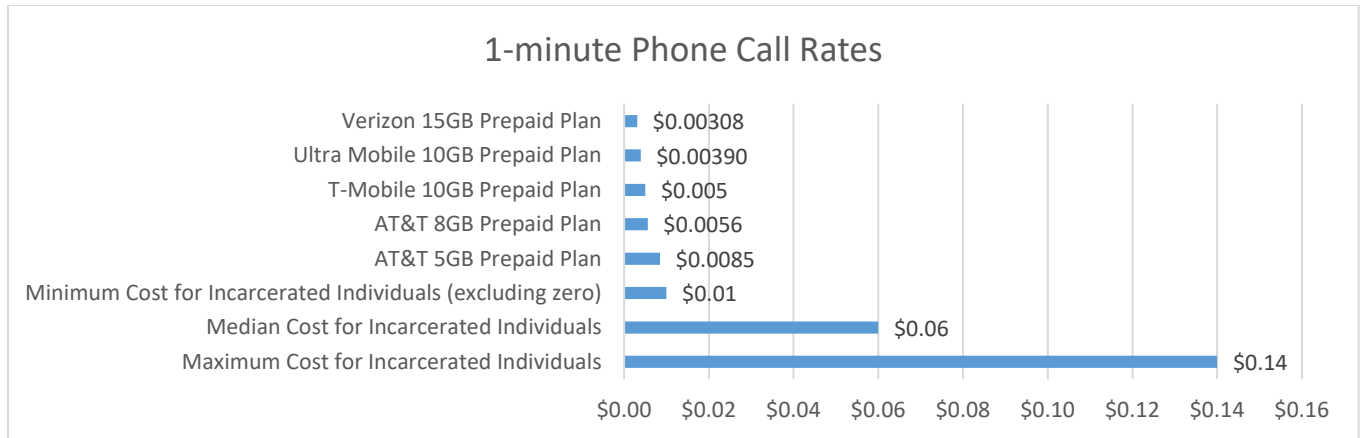


Figure 4: Rate comparison with Telecommunication Fee for 1-minute phone calls

Market Trends for the General Public

By examining how telecommunication costs have changed for the general public in recent years, we can get a better understanding of how these trends have compared to the costs incurred by the incarcerated population. Using Consumer Price Index (CPI) data,⁵⁹ we were able to examine how the rising cost of wireless and residential telephone use compares to inflation since 2016. The CPI (vertical axis) is a measure of the average change over time of the price of a predetermined group of common consumer goods and services.⁶⁰ As seen in Figure 5, the price of residential telephone use has generally aligned with overall market inflation as measured by the CPI, while the price of wireless telephone use has fallen since 2016. Combining the fact that overall market prices have risen, and wireless telephone prices have fallen, wireless telephones have become significantly cheaper when compared to other goods. With intense competition and improved efficiency under the expansion of 5G, the price of wireless telephone use is expected to stay on this current course in the next few years.⁶¹

⁵⁹ [St. Louis Fed Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers: All Items in U.S. City Average](#)

⁶⁰ <https://www.bls.gov/cpi/>

⁶¹ [Tech Insights- 2024 Telecomm Trends](#)

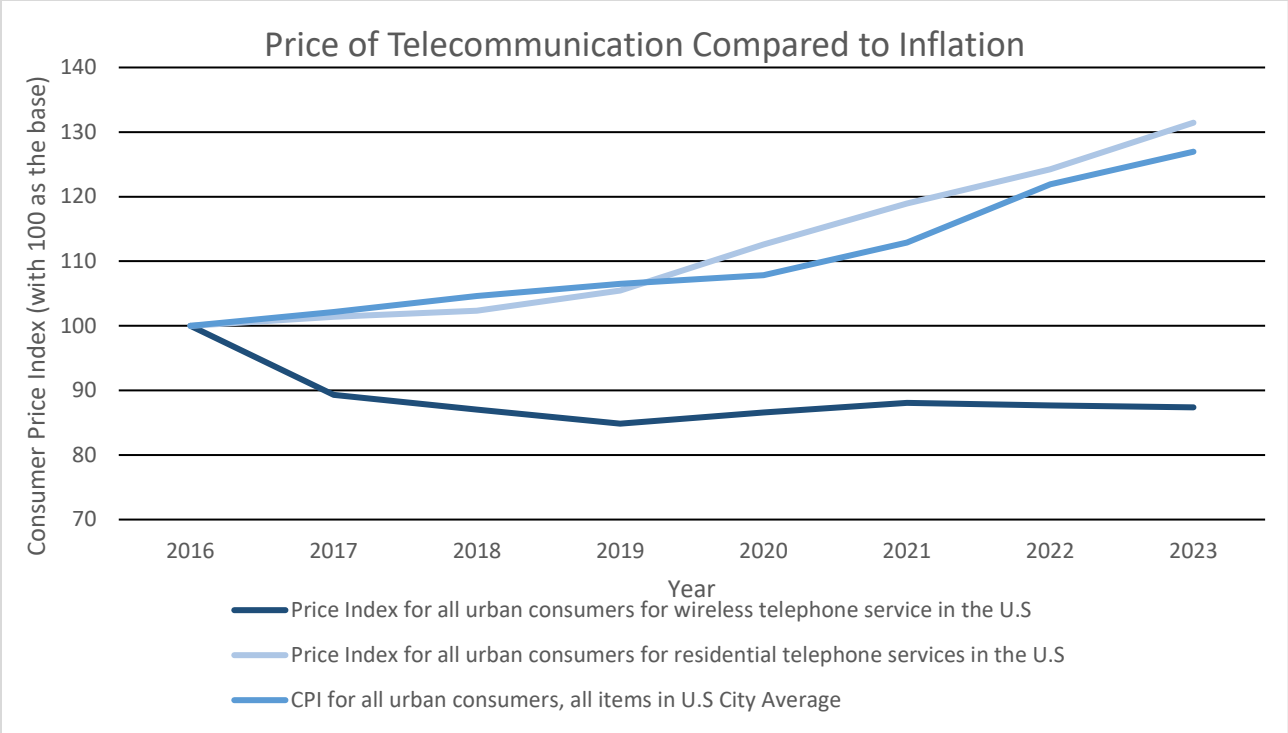


Figure 5: Price of telecommunication compared to inflation for the general public

Future Market Trends for Incarcerated Populations (2024-2030)

Figure 6 shows the per-minute call rates for incarcerated individuals and their families in 2024. The highest rate, \$0.14 per minute (which is a current cap by FCC), is charged in Alaska, Arkansas, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. Conversely, California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Minnesota offer phone calls at no cost. The average rate charged per minute is \$0.07, and the median rate is \$0.06. Washington State’s per-minute rate is below both values, at \$0.05.

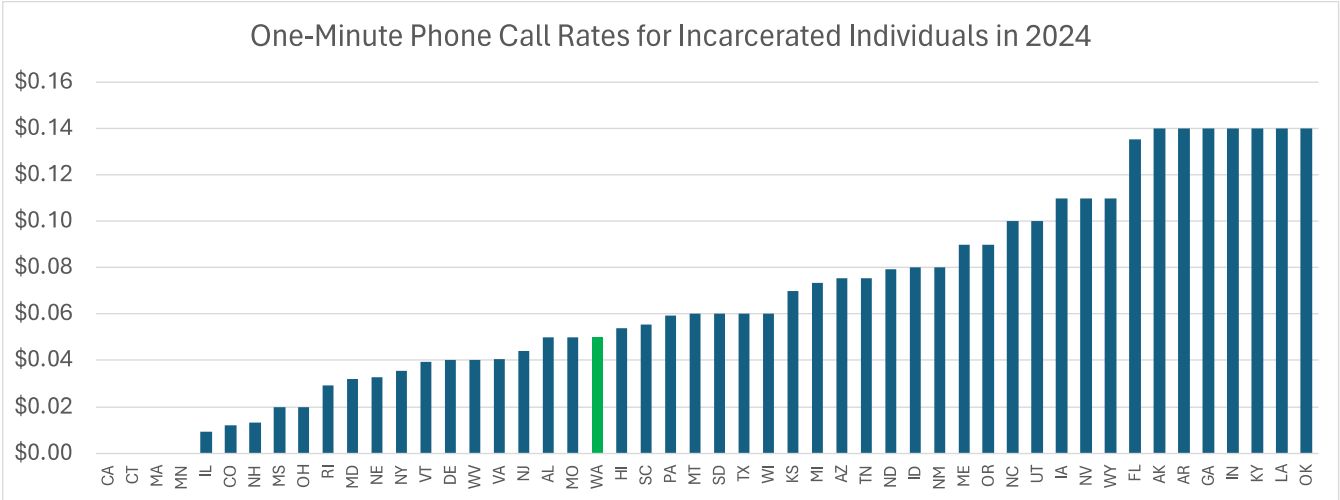


Figure 6: One-minute phone call rates for incarcerated individuals in 2024, by state

To predict market changes and trends from 2024 to 2030, we anticipate that all call and video communication rates will align with the new FCC regulations set to take effect in January 2025. Table 3 outlines the upcoming FCC rate structure for audio and video communication, which will be based on the average daily population (ADP) of jails and industry wide average costs.

Washington’s per-minute phone call rate currently falls below the FCC caps. Rate caps will bring significant change to the prison communications industry as the new caps are below many states’ current rates, illustrated below in Figures 7 and 8. Similarly, new caps for video calls will greatly decrease the amount charged to families for communication. Both video and phone caps will lessen total revenue from prison communications. Furthermore, the FCC plans to ban the collection of commissions entirely.⁶² It is also possible that with the decrease in revenue, the costs of communication will fall more heavily on the state. If the service providers’ revenue decreases, they may seek to move more of their costs to the states to maintain desired profit margins. The significance of these rate caps should not be understated, and current market trends may not necessarily hold in all locations.

Table 3: New rate caps by tier⁶³

Tier (ADP)	Audio (Permanent) (per minute)		Video (Interim) (per minute)	
	Current Caps	New Caps	Current Caps	New Caps
Prisons (any ADP)	\$0.14*	\$0.06	N/A	\$0.16
Large Jails (1,000+)	\$0.16*	\$0.06	N/A	\$0.11
Med. Jails (350-999)	\$0.21	\$0.07	N/A	\$0.12
Small Jails (100-349)	\$0.21	\$0.09	N/A	\$0.14
Very Small Jails (0-99)	\$0.21	\$0.12	N/A	\$0.25

*Current cap figures that include a \$0.02 additive for facility costs, which equates to the allowance made for facility incurred IPCS costs reflected in contractually prescribed site commissions, the closest available comparison.

⁶² <https://docs.fcc.gov/public/attachments/DOC-404087A1.pdf>

⁶³ Federal Communications Commission

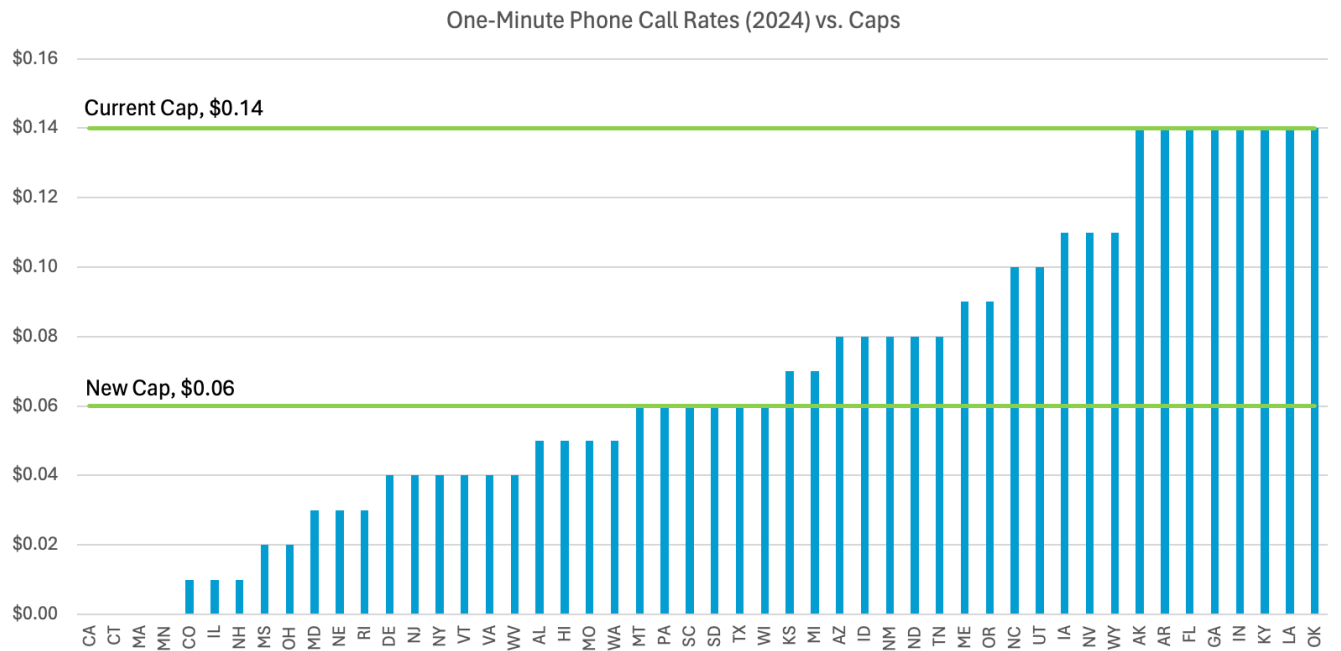


Figure 7: One-minute phone call rates in 2024 vs. new and current caps

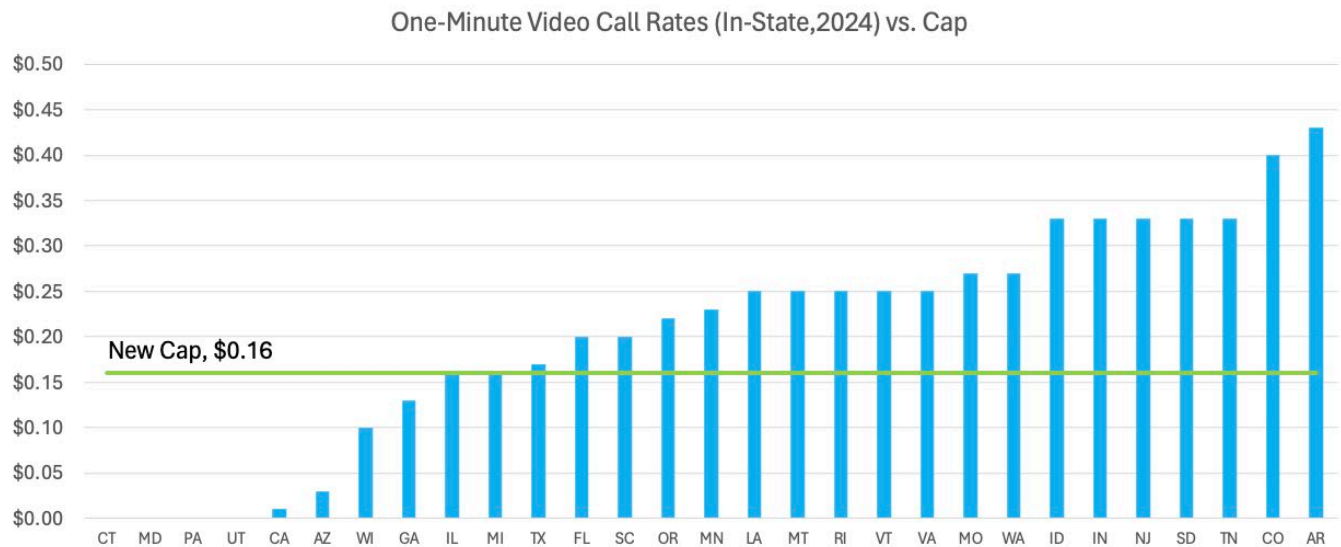


Figure 8: One-minute in-state video call rates in 2024 vs. new cap

History of Rate Cap Determination

In 2022, the U.S. Congress passed the Martha Wright-Reed Just and Reasonable Communications Act. This act was named after Martha Wright-Reed, a visually impaired elderly woman who had to spend hundreds of dollars a month to keep in contact with her grandson. The act intends to expand the power of the FCC to lower communication rates for incarcerated individuals. This act intends to decrease the financial burden of communication on incarcerated individuals and their families.

The powers granted to the FCC by this act include to the powers to adjust rate caps for all modes of communication, establish interim rate caps for incarcerated people’s communications services (IPCS) providers, prohibit IPCS providers from making commission payments, and strengthen accessibility requirements. Additionally, the FCC can use industry wide average costs to determine rate caps, which was previously not possible under the D.C. Circuit's *GTL v. FCC* ruling.

In addition to using industry-wide average costs, the FCC rate caps were determined with the standard of only including costs that are “used and useful”, a legal doctrine that is being used in attempt to ensure that ratepayers are not forced to pay a return on investments that do not directly benefit them.

Free-of-Charge Communication Services

While no-cost calling is not free to the state, it offers benefits to incarcerated individuals and their families. Research shows that increased communication with loved ones can have positive effects for incarcerated individuals' mental health and behavior, and possibly even prevent recidivism.⁶⁴ Additionally, those who bear the costs of communication with incarcerated individuals are often low-income families. For these reasons, five states have instated no-cost calling. These states are California, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. (See Table 4 for more details).

Connecticut made phone calls free for incarcerated individuals starting July 1, 2022. The state also extended this to include all voice communications, video calls, and electronic mail services. In 2023, Minnesota, California, and Massachusetts began offering free voice communication and other services. Colorado will implement free phone calls starting July 1, 2025. Several other states are in the process of passing similar legislation.

Table 4: States that provide free of cost communication services⁶⁵

State	Free Services Provided	Date Implemented	Number of State Prisons (2022) ⁶⁶	Prison Population (2022) ⁶⁶ Error! Bookmark not defined.
California	All voice communication, including video and electronic mail services, and unlimited phone calls.	January 1, 2023	34	97,608
Colorado	Phone calls	By July 1, 2025	21	17,168
Connecticut	All voice communication, including video and electronic mail services, and 90 minutes of phone call time per day.	July 1, 2022	13	10,506
Massachusetts	All voice communication, including video and electronic mail services, and unlimited phone calls	December 1, 2023	13	6,001
Minnesota	Phone calls	July 1, 2023	11	8,636

California

On January 1, 2023, California passed Senate Bill 1008, known as the "Keep Families Connected Act," which introduced unlimited free calling for incarcerated individuals, limited to 15-minute increments. Before the bill passed, the state provided two free 15-minute calls every two weeks, costing taxpayers about \$214,000 in December of 2022. After the bill took effect in January, the daily call volume in state prisons surged from 1.4 million minutes in December 2022 to over 3.5 million minutes by June 2023,

⁶⁴ "The Effects of Prison Visits from Family Members on Prisoners' Well-Being, Prison Rule Breaking, and Recidivism: A Review of Research Since 1991", 2017

⁶⁵ States' Department of Corrections

⁶⁶ <https://nicic.gov/resources/nic-library/state-statistics>

resulting in communication costs of nearly \$2.4 million for that month. In 2022, the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation paid its contracted communications vendor, ViaPath, an estimated \$1.67 million for all communication services, including phone calls, video services, and electronic mail services. This figure jumped to approximately \$34.89 million in 2023, marking a \$33.21 million increase, or roughly 20 times the previous cost.

Following the introduction of free communication services, some incarcerated individuals reported reduced phone accessibility and longer wait times due to higher demand, which is an issue that persists over a year later. Additionally, there have been prolonged outages of ViaPath's email system, lasting weeks at multiple California facilities, and legal challenges have delayed the distribution of new tablets by more than a year.⁶⁷

Colorado

Colorado is taking a more gradual approach to implementing free communication by increasing its responsibility for phone call costs each year. In 2023, the Colorado Department of Corrections paid for 25% of total phone time, increasing to 35% in 2024. Beginning in 2025, the Colorado Department of Corrections will pay for 100% of phone call rates, making phone calls free for incarcerated individuals and their families. These increases were estimated to cost the state \$229,783 in 2023, \$386,034 in 2024, and \$1,102,956 each year thereafter.⁶⁸

This method of easing into no-cost calls was decided upon in Colorado legislation.⁶⁹ The original introduction of House Bill 23-1133 on January 30, 2023 included no such clause, stating that the full change would be effective immediately. The subsequent bill on April 20, 2023 held the gradual change clause, which eventually made it into the signed act on June 7, 2023.

Connecticut

Connecticut was the first U.S. state to make all prison phone calls free, passing Senate Bill 972 in 2021 that dropped the cost of a 15-minute call from \$2.10 to free. To pay for prison communication costs, \$9.5 million was allocated from the state's general fund for fiscal years 2024 and 2025 — \$6 million to cover phone calls and \$3.5 million for electronic messaging. This equates to roughly \$4.75 million a year that Connecticut pays to provide no-cost calls.

Figure 9 displays the significant surge in demand that states can likely expect after implementing a law for free prison phone calls based on both the observations from other states and core economic principles of demand. After Connecticut implemented Senate Bill 972, the number of phone calls made in its prison system increased from around 500 to 700 thousand calls a month to nearly 1.4 million a month and has remained above 1.1 million ever since.

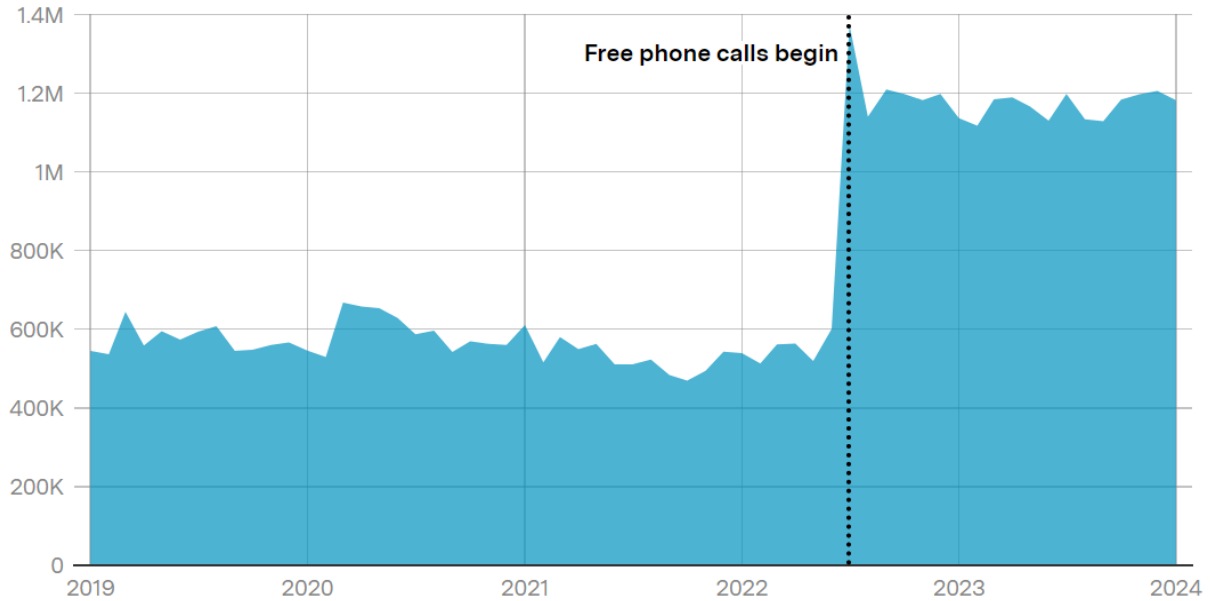
⁶⁷ [The Appeal](#)

⁶⁸ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023A/bills/fn/2023a_hb1133_r3.pdf

⁶⁹ <https://leg.colorado.gov/bills/hb23-1133>

Phone calls surged when prisons stopped charging for them

Number of monthly completed phone calls in Connecticut prisons



Data as of January 1, 2024.

Source: Connecticut Department of Correction

Figure 9: Number of prison phone calls made in Connecticut over time

Massachusetts

Massachusetts implemented House Bill 1796 on December 1, 2023, effectively reducing the cost of a 15-minute phone call from \$1.80 to free. Massachusetts created a Communication Trust Fund for the purpose of funding free communication statewide, and \$10 million was the total amount allocated in the state's budget in 2024. This budget has equated to roughly 5.9 cents per call minute paid for by the Massachusetts Department of Corrections, compared to the 12 cents charged per minute previously⁷⁰. The Executive Office of Administration and Finance is responsible for the partial refunds allocated back to counties for the higher demand and higher phone call costs.

In an informative meeting with Afnan Nehela, the Communications Director & Policy Advisor for Senator Jamie Eldridge of Massachusetts, the Center received insights on the implementation and the aftermath of no-cost communication policies in Massachusetts. Nehela explained that achieving no-cost communication in Massachusetts took over a decade, beginning as a standalone bill. Eventually, the bill was incorporated into the state budget rather than as separate legislation. However, the policy faced immediate challenges, and Massachusetts is currently monitoring outcomes.⁷¹

There are challenges and areas for improvement. First, sheriffs have little incentive to renegotiate lower rates with communication vendors, as they are reimbursed through the government budget – which is

⁷⁰ Plymouth Independent, *Prisoners are spending thousands of hours a month talking on the phone-for free*

<https://www.plymouthindependent.org/prisoners-are-spending-thousands-of-hours-a-month-talking-on-the-phone-for-free/>

⁷¹ Afnan Nehela, Primary Source

ultimately costing taxpayers. Seven out of thirteen county sheriffs have yet to negotiate lower costs under the No-Cost Calls law. If amendments aren't met by as late as March 31, 2025, the \$10 million trust fund money will not cover the telecommunication expenses. Opposition is also felt by Democrats who feel there was a lack of preparation to build the trust fund and that cuts from the original \$20 million was a "slap in the face"⁷². The increased call volume has also exposed infrastructure challenges; many facilities lack the capacity to meet the high demand for phone calls. Additionally, gang dynamics in some Massachusetts prisons have affected phone access for certain individuals. In similar facilities, there have been reports that the rise in phone use has been linked to criminal activities such as witness intimidation and stalking.⁷³

Anecdotal evidence suggests positive family impacts of the no-cost policy. For instance, one mother shared that her son could now do homework with his incarcerated father over the phone. In addition, she could allocate her finances to essentials like groceries instead of telecommunication fees. With call volumes tripling, many inmates are feeling more connected to the outside world. Families have also avoided paying the additional fees for money holding accounts required by Securus.

Minnesota

With the implementation of SF (Standard Form) 2909 on July 1, 2023, all phone calls became free for inmates in Minnesota state prisons. This change eliminated the previous per-minute charge of 5 cents, marking the first decrease in phone call rates since 2016 when the cost dropped from 43 cents per minute to 5 cents. The bill allocated \$3.1 million to cover voice communication services for all incarcerated persons, allowing any remaining balance at year-end to carry over to the following year. An additional \$500,000 was designated for virtual court coordination and modernization efforts. Prior to this bill, Minnesota inmates and their families were paying \$4.5 million⁷⁴ a year to ViaPath for communication services. Much of Minnesota's inmate population is composed of minorities and low-income individuals, and the communication costs placed a significant financial strain on them and their families. By making calls free, Minnesota aimed to reduce the economic burden on incarcerated individuals, enhance family connections, and support rehabilitation efforts.

The Center received more feedback on how representatives can successfully push free voice communication within DOC and like facilities and the shortcomings that the Judiciary and Public Safety budget bill has faced. In another informative meeting, Senator Clare Oumou Verbeten shared how incarcerated persons receiving care from Direct Care and Treatment Facilities were not technically associated with the DOC; therefore, they were not protected in the first version of the bill. With that said, the Senator's advice for Washington legislators was to make sure to have inclusive language for different types of facilities to avoid this problem. Additionally, Minnesota started developing a request for proposal team (RFP) who will oversee and evaluate the request for information (RFIs) between the DOC and its third-party vendor (Securus) on all other communications besides phone call. An RFP group and its research will help policy analysts track the economic development created by the bill.

⁷² State of Massachusetts, No Cost Calls Memo: October 2024

⁷³ WPRI.com, *Inmates in Massachusetts are currently allowed to make free unlimited calls* [https://www.wpri.com/news/local-news/se-mass/sheriff-seeks-changes-to-inmate-calls-due-to-cost-security-concerns/#:~:text=\(WPRI\)%20%E2%80%94%20Inmates%20in%20Massachusetts,to%20make%20free%20unlimited%20calls](https://www.wpri.com/news/local-news/se-mass/sheriff-seeks-changes-to-inmate-calls-due-to-cost-security-concerns/#:~:text=(WPRI)%20%E2%80%94%20Inmates%20in%20Massachusetts,to%20make%20free%20unlimited%20calls).

⁷⁴ <https://www.prisonphonejustice.org/news/2023/nov/15/minnesota-makes-all-calls-free-prisons-and-jails/>

Communication Costs Before and After a Switch to “Free” Communication

Table 5 shows the total amount paid by each state for communication that is free to incarcerated individuals, as well as the estimated amount that families paid before communication became free. It is important to note that there does not seem to be a correlation between the amount that families paid before the change and the total cost of free communication to the states, nor is there a correlation between the total cost of free communication and prison population. This is likely due to other variables such as numbers of state prisons, the existing infrastructure in each state, and contract negotiations with the vendors.

Table 5: Amount paid to the vendor before and after making communication services free

State	Vendor	Estimated amount families paid to vendors before communication services became free	Estimated cost increase for free communication in the first year - amount that states pay to vendors
California ⁷⁵	ViaPath	N/A	\$33,213,181 (2023)
Colorado ⁷⁶	Securus	N/A	\$1,102,956 (2025)
Connecticut ⁷⁷	Securus	\$13,200,000 (2018) ⁷⁸	\$4,750,000 (2024)
Massachusetts ⁷⁹	Securus	\$3,134,049.33 (2018) ⁸⁰	\$20,000,000 (2024)
Minnesota ⁸¹	ViaPath	\$4,500.000 (2022) ⁸²	\$3,593,847.52 (2024) ⁸³

Pennsylvania: Upcoming No Cost-Call Legislation

Although Pennsylvania does not yet have no cost-calls, SB 1224 has been introduced by Senator Cappelletti to make it happen. According to Nicklaus Centurione, the Legislative Director for Senator Cappelletti and Executive Director of the Senate State Government Committee, the implementation of cost-free communications for incarcerated individuals is estimated to cost \$16.5 million total. Of this \$16.5 million, 30% is expected to go to county jails and the remaining 70% to state prisons. This estimation took place before the FCC’s redetermined rate caps and banned commission models, so it may need further evaluation. According to Centurione, state prisons collected \$1.15 million per month in communications costs on average, of which \$335,000 would be commissions paid to the prison. This will no longer be possible after the FCC ruling which will greatly impact their cost structure.

⁷⁵ Contracts provided to CEBR from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitations.

⁷⁶ https://leg.colorado.gov/sites/default/files/documents/2023A/bills/fn/2023a_hb1133_r3.pdf

⁷⁷ <https://www.ctpublic.org/news/investigative/2024-05-31/connecticut-free-prison-phone-calls-but-work-is-just-beginning>

⁷⁸ <https://apnews.com/general-news-8ef884d62044439ab2cca50cd40b0e73>

⁷⁹ <https://www.boston25news.com/news/local/free-calls-incarcerated-individuals-all-mass-prisons-can-now-connect-outside-world-no-cost-them/KGY7IQEI0VA6BD3ZNOWJNM3TOY/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.prisonphonejustice.org/>

⁸¹ Email sent to CEBR from the Minnesota DOC

⁸² <https://www.prisonphonejustice.org/news/2023/nov/15/minnesota-makes-all-calls-free-prisons-and-jails/>

⁸³ Minnesota DOC

Conclusion

Previously, DOCs were given the agency to determine phone call rates in the revenue-sharing model in which IPCS vendors provide a percentage of their earnings as a commission. The vendor and the state would use a bargaining process to determine rates, and each state would then choose a vendor to hold the rights to the state's prison communications contract.

Nonprofits, including Worth Rises, Prison Policy Initiative, and Prison Phone Justice, have proved that commission funds are coming from the pockets of incarcerated individuals' families, causing financial strain. This was caused by DOCs choosing contracts with the most profitable commission rates as well as low wages for prisoners.

The FCC capped prison phone call rates at \$0.06 per minute and video rates at \$0.16, effective January 2025, which eliminates the above market prices from telecommunication vendors. Additionally, the FCC has banned commission payments on phone calls which incentivizes states to negotiate for more favorable prices for inmates. Some states have already cut commission payments from vendors and adopted zero-cost prison communication. Washington State legislators can observe and learn from evolving policies in these states.

Policy Advisor Afnan Nehela (for Senator Eldridge, MA) shared that the issues that bill H.1796 (No-Cost Calls) is facing might have been mitigated by allocating more funds to infrastructure improvements, such as installing new phone booths and repairing existing ones. Nehela also informed the Center about Michigan's recent cost deduction within their payment system before the FCC ruling. Further research could be done on the effects of finding a middle ground between lowering communication costs and making communication free.⁸⁴

Senator Verbeten (District 66 MN) emphasized how incarcerated persons in health care facilities like Direct Care and Treatment Facilities also need to be written into the language of the bill in order to receive free phone calls by the state. See Appendix B for the full list of the legal takeaways the Center received from lawmakers during this research or Table 7 to see the boost that Minnesota saw in call volume.

Currently, 20 states charge a per-minute phone call rate that is above the upcoming FCC rate cap. More time is needed to evaluate how they will adjust to the new ruling. Washington State falls on the lower end of prison phone call rates, charging \$0.05 per minute. However, at \$0.27 per minute, Washington falls above the FCC rate cap of \$0.16 per minute for video calls and will need to adjust accordingly.

This report has limitations in answering the proviso question regarding how much more states are paying since making all communication services free. The Center explains how there is no correlation to state costs compared to how much families were paying before the change (p.25). However, Washington State legislators may benefit from reading this report knowing that DOCs need an incentive to negotiate lower communication prices and that companies like Ameelio aim to improve state contracts going forward so that families and incarcerated individuals can stay connected at no cost.

⁸⁴ Afnan Nehela, Primary Source

About the Authors

The Center for Economic and Business Research is an outreach center at Western Washington University located within the College of Business and Economics. In addition to publishing the Puget Sound Economic Forecaster, the Center connects the resources found throughout the University to assist for-profit, non-profit, government agencies, quasi-government entities, and tribal communities in gathering and analyzing useful data to respond to specific questions. We use a number of collaborative approaches to help inform our clients so that they are better able to hold policy discussions and craft decisions.

The Center employs students, staff and faculty from across the University as well as outside resources to meet the individual needs of those we work with. Our work is based on academic approaches and rigor that not only provides a neutral analytical perspective but also provides applied learning opportunities. We focus on developing collaborative relationships with our clients and not simply delivering an end product.

The approaches we utilize are insightful, useful, and are all a part of the debate surrounding the topics we explore; however, none are absolutely fail-safe. Data, by nature, is challenged by how it is collected and how it is leveraged with other data sources. Following only one approach without deviation is ill-advised. We provide a variety of insights within our work – not only on the topic at hand but also the resources (data) that inform that topic.

We are always seeking opportunities to bring the strengths of Western Washington University to fruition within our region. If you have a need for analysis work or comments on this report, we encourage you to contact us at 360-650-3909 or by email at cebr@wwu.edu.

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The Center for Economic and Business Research is directed by Hart Hodges, Ph.D. and James McCafferty.

Appendix A

Amount Each State Paid to Their Vendor

Table 6 provides a breakdown of the amounts each state pays to its contracted Incarcerated People’s Communication Service (IPCS) provider. It is worth noting that many states do not directly pay the vendor because the rates charged to the incarcerated individuals typically cover the telecommunication costs. Depending on the state, some DOCs earn a commission from their contracted vendor, also referred to as a “kickback”. There are some states such as Iowa that pay small sums (\$14,500) each year for services such as the storage of video call equipment⁸⁵. All in all, many states do not pay a significant amount to the vendor.

Note: NA (Not Available) refers to public records requests denied or no response available at this time

Table 6: Total amount paid by state (aggregate), dollar amounts

State	Year(s) of Contract	Vendor ⁸⁶	Amount Paid ⁸⁷
Alabama	-	Securus	N/A
Alaska	2021	Securus	\$0
Arizona	-	ICSolutions	N/A
Arkansas	-	Securus	N/A
California	2022-2024	ViaPath	\$69,727,638
Colorado	2024-2025	Securus	\$947,495
Connecticut	2023-2026	Securus	\$21,230,640
Delaware	-	ViaPath	N/A
Florida	2017-2018	ViaPath	\$0
Georgia	2015-2022	Securus	\$0
Hawaii	-	ViaPath	NA
Idaho	2014	ICSolutions	\$0
Illinois	-	Securus	N/A
Indiana	2018	ViaPath	\$0
Iowa	2022	ICSolutions	\$15,000
Kansas	2022-2023	ICSolutions	\$1,900,000
Kentucky	2024	Securus	\$0
Louisiana	-	Securus	N/A
Maine	2023-2024	ViaPath	\$1,711,913
Maryland	2021-2023	ViaPath	\$22,108,292
Massachusetts	-	Securus	N/A
Michigan	2018-present	ViaPath	\$96,480,000
Minnesota	2023-2024	ViaPath	\$3,593,848
Mississippi	-	ViaPath	N/A

⁸⁵ Ameelio, (Primary Source) Contract Agreements

⁸⁶ Worth Rises

⁸⁷ State Department of Correction (Per State Contract)

State	Year(s) of Contract	Vendor ⁸⁶	Amount Paid ⁸⁷
<i>Missouri</i>	-	Securus	N/A
<i>Montana</i>	2023	ICSolutions	\$0
<i>Nebraska</i>	-	ViaPath	N/A
<i>Nevada</i>	2019-2025	Securus	\$16,800,000
<i>New Hampshire</i>	-	ViaPath	N/A
<i>New Jersey</i>	2016-2022	ViaPath	\$0
<i>New Mexico</i>	2023-2025	Securus	\$461,531
<i>New York</i>	-	Securus	N/A
<i>North Carolina</i>	2023	ViaPath	Revenue not reported
<i>North Dakota</i>	-	Securus	N/A
<i>Ohio</i>	2022-2023	ViaPath	\$0
<i>Oklahoma</i>	2021	Securus	\$0
<i>Oregon</i>	2021-2024	ICSolutions	Revenue not reported
<i>Pennsylvania</i>	-	Securus	N/A
<i>Rhode Island</i>	2024-2025	Securus	\$0
<i>South Carolina</i>	2015	ViaPath	\$0
<i>South Dakota</i>	2016-2025	ViaPath	\$0
<i>Tennessee</i>	-	ViaPath	N/A
<i>Texas</i>	2015-2024	Securus	\$0
<i>Utah</i>	-	ViaPath	N/A
<i>Vermont</i>	2017-2023	ViaPath	\$125,000
<i>Virginia</i>	2022-2023	ViaPath	\$15,400,000
<i>Washington</i>	2015-2024	Securus	\$0
<i>West Virginia</i>	-	ViaPath	N/A
<i>Wisconsin</i>	2018-2024	ICSolutions	\$0
<i>Wyoming</i>	2023	ICSolutions	\$0

Minnesota DOC Performance Report

In July 2023, the Minnesota DOC started paying for all of the calls from incarcerated persons. There was a 33.1 percent increase of calls with the first month after incarcerated persons no longer had to pay for a phone call. Total calls increased by 11,052,396 after Standard Form 2909 was implemented into the Judiciary and Public Safety budget. This graph can be found on p. 60 of the 2023 Performance Report.⁸⁸

Table 7: Minutes called by incarcerated persons in 2023

Month	Incarcerated Person Free Call Minutes	Incarcerated Person-Paid Call Minutes
Jan 2023	310,823	5,945,370
Feb 2023	267,489	5,540,169
Mar 2023	273,008	5,781,513
Apr 2023	265,359	5,959,453
May 2023	321,042	5,819,996
June 2023	275,175	5,716,660
Jul 2023	7,608,475	0
Aug 2023	7,271,445	0
Sep 2023	7,077,674	0
Oct 2023	7,334,358	0
Nov 2023	7,311,637	0
Dec 2023	7,499,074	0
Total	45,815,557	34,763,161

⁸⁸MN Department of Corrections, Performance Report 2023
https://mn.gov/doc/assets/2023%20DOC%20Performance%20Report_Accessibility_Final_v2_tcm1089-608441.pdf

Appendix B

Policy Takeaways

- Massachusetts legislators are important stakeholders in this report because of their feedback on bill H.1796 titled No Cost Call that was implemented December 1, 2023.⁸⁹ While families have shared positive feedback on moving out of debt, facilities have reported an increase in criminal activities such as witness intimidation and stalking, as well as poor infrastructure of phone booths due to a lack of preparation of demand.
- In 2020 the Human Rights Defense Center (HRDC) acted against Securus and GTL in the District of Maryland for illegal price fixing. “The district court only partially granted Defendants’ motion to dismiss the suit on September 30, 2021, finding the complaint sufficiently stated an antitrust claim but not a civil claim under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) Act.”⁹⁰ The case was reversed in 2023.
- Ameelio is a competitive non-profit organization that offers telecom communication services free of cost. Ameelio does not outsource or bundle any of its services (i.e. software, construction, engineering) so problem solving within any of these areas is cheaper when operations are done in house. This also makes it easier for them to construct an accurate and transparent fiscal note which is made public on their website. They have already contracted with Iowa’s DOC and are a promising alternative to large Telecom vendors.⁹¹
- In 2020 the Human Rights Defense Center (HRDC) acted against Securus and GTL in the District of Maryland for illegal price fixing. “The district court only partially granted Defendants’ motion to dismiss the suit on September 30, 2021, finding the complaint sufficiently stated an antitrust claim but not a civil claim under the Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organization (RICO) Act.”⁹² The case was reversed in 2023.

Gaining Bill Support: Takeaways from Policy Advisor Nehela and Senator Verbeten

- Be clear about the importance of family connections.
- Emphasize fiscal responsibility; putting vendors in competition with each other and using the free market can help gain bipartisan support.
- Writing the bill as a standard form within the budget instead of a standalone bill.
- Add reporting requirements regarding the agency’s communication contracts, rates, spending of appropriated funds, and monthly message and call volume.⁹³
- *“Gather all stakeholders together in the same room. It is much easier when you are aligned with the administration and making sure everyone is speaking the same language as far as assumptions and definitions.”* – Senator Verbeten
- *“Be financially prepared to innovate infrastructure and calling booths with an increase in call volume.”* – Policy Advisor Nehela

⁸⁹ Progressive Mass, No Cost Calls (2023) <https://www.progressivemass.com/issues/no-cost-calls-2023-action/#about>

⁹⁰ Prison Legal News, Forth Circuit Reinstates HRDC’s RICO claim Against Securus and ViaPath <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2024/may/1/fourth-circuit-reinstates-hrdcs-rico-claim-against-securus-and-viath/>

⁹¹ April Feng, CEO of Ameelio (2024), Primary Source, <https://www.ameelio.org/about-us>

⁹² Prison Legal News, Forth Circuit Reinstates HRDC’s RICO claim Against Securus and ViaPath <https://www.prisonlegalnews.org/news/2024/may/1/fourth-circuit-reinstates-hrdcs-rico-claim-against-securus-and-viath/>

⁹³ MN Department of Corrections, Performance Report 2023 https://mn.gov/doc/assets/2023%20DOC%20Performance%20Report_Accessibility_Final_v2_tcm1089-608441.pdf