



HB 3713 HA 1

Representative Laura Faver Dias

PROTECT COMMUNICATION FOR PEOPLE IN IDOC

Denying physical mail is not an effective solution to the problem of drugs and contraband in prison. Physical mail is directly linked to strengthening the relationships people in prison have with loved ones, which increases rehabilitation, reentry success, and public safety.

Why this is a Problem:

- In some states, **drug use and overdoses have increased** after the implementation of mail scanning policies (Prison Policy Initiative, 2022).
- Mail is often the most **commonly used, affordable, and accessible** form of communication for people who are incarcerated and their loved ones.
- There is an emotional and mental health impact on people in prison when they can no longer receive the original letters from their loved ones and support systems. Decades of research show that **staying in communication improves health, behavior, and reentry success**, reducing the likelihood of returning to prison.
- Currently, people can be cut off from communications with outside support as a **disciplinary response**, which often makes situations worse and leads to unnecessary stress, further discipline, and harmful outcomes.
- **Original physical mail** is important to have a tangible letter or photo to hold on to, reread, and even take with them when they return home. It is invaluable for participating in educational correspondence courses and accessing books and news.

Solution:

HB 3713 HA 1 would protect the right of every person who is incarcerated to receive the original, physical copy of their mail unless the mail is determined to threaten the security or safety of the institution. HB 3713 HA 1 would also:

- Require the Department of Corrections to publicly report data regarding mail identified as a threat, including the type of threat by facility and outcome.
- Ensure people who are incarcerated maintain the right to communicate with their outside support network without losing access due to disciplinary sanctions.
- Allow people who are incarcerated to communicate with their support systems via phone, mail, video, or electronic message free of charge.

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