



Affordable Communications Keep Families Connected

For people who are incarcerated, family connection is one of the strongest predictors of successful rehabilitation and lower recidivism.

Problem:

- **Families already spend thousands of dollars annually to stay in touch with and provide support for their incarcerated loved ones.** Phone calls, emails, long-distance travel for visits, and commissary make up the majority of costs that increase financial strain on loved ones.
- **Scanning and digitizing physical mail can create new costs for people who are incarcerated and their loved ones.** In some states, people must pay per page and per photo, and those incarcerated must pay per page to print their own mail.
- **When communication becomes harder or less personal, family stability suffers.** Research shows that barriers to mail reduce trust, increase emotional distress, and weaken relationships that are crucial for rehabilitation (Arditti, 2012).
- **Increasing financial barriers to communication put rehabilitation and long-term reentry success at risk.** People who feel connected to family are more motivated to complete programs, maintain good behavior, and plan for their future.

Solution:

HB 4235 HA 2 would help to keep families connected by ensuring communication remains accessible and affordable. This bill would:

- **Prohibit any additional fees for people who are incarcerated and their loved ones for sending or receiving correspondence by postal mail or a commercial shipping service.** Right now, there is no additional cost to sending mail, and this bill would keep mail free except for the standard postage rate.
- **Prevent the IDOC from generating revenue from communication services between people who are incarcerated and their loved ones.** Currently, IDOC does not profit from communications services, and this bill would prevent future financial incentives that undermine family connections.
- **Ensure postage stamps and mailing supplies are sold at cost in the commissary.**
- **Require annual reports from IDOC on communication contracts spending and rates.**