



SUPPORT HB20-1267

Require transparency of jail phone call costs and kickbacks

What does HB 1267 do?

Requires jail phone providers to collect and report the costs of jail phone calls and the total amount of government kickbacks paid by the provider. Reports must be made quarterly to the Public Utility Commission, which will post the data on its website.

What problem does HB 1267 solve?

High phone costs due to lack of market influence

- Colorado jails charge an average of almost \$7.00 for a 15-minute call. It costs \$14.85 for a 15-minute call at the Arapahoe County Detention Center.
- Jail phone providers limit choice of vendor by directly purchasing their competitors. Near monopolies plus a lack of transparency allow for incredibly high costs for calls.

Missing, incomplete data

- We have incomplete information about the costs of jail phone calls across Colorado. Jail phone providers refuse to respond to public records requests seeking the costs of calls. Colorado sheriffs have incomplete information. The public is left in the dark.

Why support transparency of jail phone call costs?

Reduce recidivism

- Affordable phone calls improve the safety and well-being of all communities because regular communication between incarcerated people and their families reduces recidivism and improves post-release outcomes.

Combat exploitative government kickbacks

- The Colorado legislature banned prisons from receiving commissions from prison phone providers. Yet, these companies continue to compete for jail contracts by offering counties large portions of the revenue.
- In 2018, the jail phone provider paid Jefferson County \$715,000 in kickbacks. HB1267 will give the public complete information on kickback amounts to all counties.

Increase bargaining power of counties

- Jail phone providers are highly effective at cutting self-serving contracts with jails. With counties able to compare rates, commissions and fees across the state, they will be in a better position to negotiate fair contracts.

Sunshine is the best disinfectant

- Through intentionally convoluted contracts, jail phone providers have generated a revenue stream entirely separate from actual phone rates in the form of hidden fees that fleece consumers. This legislation would require companies to disclose the hidden fees they charge.

Who Supports HB-1267?

Colorado Freedom Fund, Second Chance Center, Arc of Colorado, Colorado Fiscal Institute, Colorado Cross-Disability Coalition, Denver Homeless Out Loud, Colorado Criminal Justice Reform Coalition, Interfaith Alliance, Prison Policy Initiative, Colorado Criminal Defense Bar, Women's Lobby of Colorado

Our Neighbors' Stories



Mary's son was held in the Denver County jail on a \$100 bond. She was forced to decline his calls from jail because she could not afford to accept them. She is 83 years old and was unable to go to the jail in person. Without the ability to accept that call, she had no way to contact her primary caretaker.

“ Without the money to pick up that call, I had no way to even make sure he was okay.”

– Mary White



In 2018, the Bensons' son was held for six months in the El Paso County jail. They spent almost \$800 to talk to their son once a day for 15 minutes for those six months. The fees amounted to around 25% of the costs of the calls.

“ We find a way to scrape together the money to talk to our son, but not all families can do that. The high cost of phone calls penalizes innocent families.”

– Gerry and Jennifer Benson



Brenda's husband was held in the Arapahoe county jail for two years. It cost \$300 a month to talk daily for 20 minutes. On top of the per minute rate, there were fees. For her to add \$50 to her account cost an additional \$4.95. Accepting a collect call and receiving a refund also meant additional fees. The fees amounted to almost 20% of the total costs.

“ I have to choose between hearing his voice or paying for utilities. It feels like a luxury to talk to him because so many families can't afford calls. But it shouldn't be a luxury to talk to your loved one.”

– Brenda Newmark

While Connie's husband was incarcerated, she spent \$8 for a ten-minute call and \$600 a month for her and her husband's family to contact him. \$130 of this total cost went to an 11% tax fee per call, 3rd party fees and transaction fees.

“ I can't visit him so these calls are all I have. It feels wrong to exploit families with no other choice.”

– Connie Blackwell

FAMILIES NEED EACH OTHER, NOT HIGH FEES