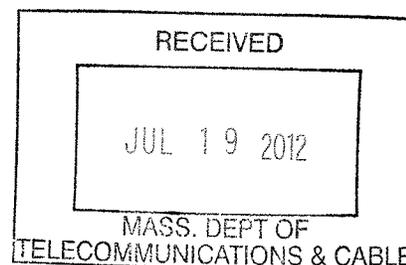


Staff Attorney
Prisoners' Legal Services
10 Winthrop Sq. 3rd Fl.
Boston, MA 02110
617-482-2773 x105



----- Forwarded message -----

From: <mmalt@comcast.net>

Date: Tue, Jul 17, 2012 at 9:24 AM

Subject: Re: Public Hearing challenging prison phone rates- July 19, 2012

To: Lizz Matos <lmatos@plsma.org>

Dear Ms. Matos,

I am unable to attend this coming Thursday's DTC public hearing on prison phone rates but would like to convey my concerns via Prisoners' Legal Services, if possible. Although I am far more fortunate than most people who suffer hardship due to Global Tel Link's outrageous rates, I believe that I have been subjected to unfair business practices by this company.

During the years that a close friend was incarcerated successively at Northeastern Correctional Center, Old Colony Correctional Center, and Bay State Correctional Center, I paid approximately 20 years' worth of monthly phone bills for collect calls from prison. I always paid my phone bill in full, on time, and usually well before the due date. Although the phone rates were exorbitant, I considered myself one of the lucky ones; I was employed full time and had no dependents, so the calls were a "luxury" I could afford without significant sacrifice. This was certainly not the case for many of the people I came to know over the years of my friend's incarceration: mothers, wives, children, and other relatives and friends who had to forgo basic necessities to keep in touch with their loved ones. In addition, for at least the last several years of his incarceration, my friend used his institutional prepaid calling account to place his calls to me, so I never received any bills for those calls.

Since my friend's release almost two and a half years ago, I have received almost no collect phone calls from prisoners; with only one exception, the friends who have occasionally called my household from prison have used their own pre-paid calling cards, so it has not fallen to me to pay the inflated costs of those calls. Recently, however, an old friend incarcerated at MCI-Norfolk called me collect during a period of ill health. The first time he called, I accepted the charges and the call went through; when he made a subsequent call, however, the call was cut off before I could accept the charges.

I contacted Global Tel Link and was told that I could not receive calls from prison unless I paid at least \$25 into an account in advance. I knew that this was not the case for my friend's wife of several decades, who told me she receives a large phone bill every month due to collect calls from her husband; my friend asked other prisoners at MCI-Norfolk and discovered no one else whose family members had been required to

set up an account for prepayment.

When I spoke to Global Tel Link again, I was advised that the reason I had to set up a pre-paid account was that I received a "high volume of inmate calls." I explained that I had not received a "high volume of inmate calls" since my friend's release in February 2010, and that for many years previous to his release, his calls were paid for on his end, not mine. I also explained that the friend who called me recently was not and would not be a routine caller to my household. The GTL representative said that it made no difference how many years had passed or what the current volume of calls to my phone number was; high volume was high volume, whether one month or one decade in the past. I also explained that I had always paid my phone bill on time, in full; I was told that this, too, was irrelevant. When I noted that no one else I knew had been required to prepay for collect calls, I was told that the others would have to do so "soon" and that my only "choice" was to set up an account or forfeit the chance to receive calls from my ill, incarcerated friend. Under the circumstances, with great reluctance, I relented and gave GTL my credit card information.

I am outraged that I am required to assume this security risk and incur a minimum expense of \$25.00 in order to receive one or two calls from an ill friend; I am even more outraged to think that people already undergoing extreme financial hardship due to this unduly expensive phone system are being, or soon will be, required to make such a minimum prepayment. It is unconscionable for a prison system and a telecommunications corporation to join forces in a manifestly unfair practice that allows them to profit by discriminating against a highly vulnerable sector of our society. If public safety and "rehabilitation" of offenders were truly the goal of the Department of Correction, the Department would be considering how to funnel its resources into services for prisoners and their families instead of lining its pockets at their expense.

Thank you for your work on this issue and on the many, many other issues concerning the safety and well being of prisoners, their families, and our society as a whole.

Sincerely,

Margaret J. Malt

From: "Lizz Matos" <lmatos@plsma.org>
To: "Lizz Matos" <lmatos@plsma.org>
Cc: "Bonnie Tenneriello" <btenneriello@plsma.org>
Sent: Friday, June 15, 2012 1:34:40 PM