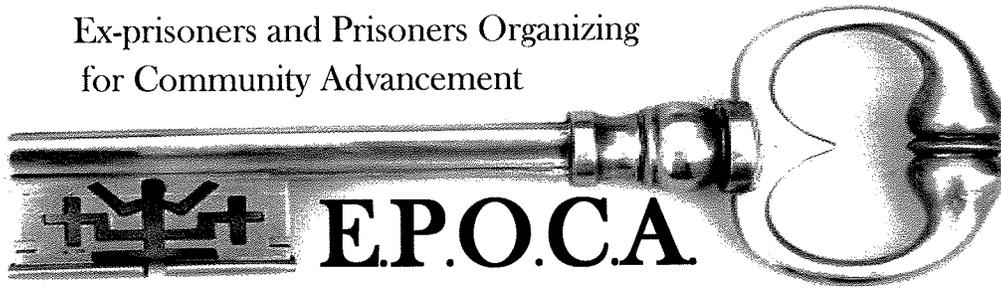
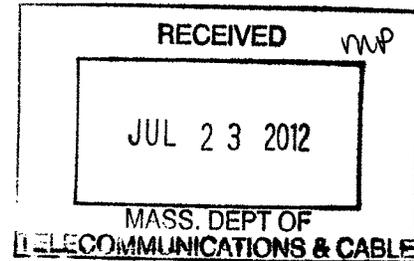


Ex-prisoners and Prisoners Organizing
for Community Advancement



July 17, 2012

Geoffrey G. Why
Commissioner
Department of Telecommunications and Cable
1000 Washington St., Suite 820
Boston, MA 02118-6500



Dear Commissioner Why,

We are writing to ask that you use your regulatory authority to ensure that prisoners' families are not subjected to telephone costs that are above the fair market rate for similar calls – in the range of \$0.05 to \$0.10 per minute standard for long-distance phone rates.

There is no reasonable justification for such calls to cost more than regular, long-distance calls. Some in state government clearly see these charges as an additional punishment or “collateral sanction,” or as a means to generate revenue for the state or county. However, high phone rates are not effective for either of these purposes, because they stack the deck against a prisoner’s successful re-entry into society, which is a community good sought by every stake-holder in the system.

These fees amount to a regressive tax on the families who can least afford it; families who have most likely lost a breadwinner, and who usually have below-average incomes to begin with. As with prisoner “lodging fees” and other such taxes, charging inmates’ families high prices to communicate by telephone is an ill-conceived and counter-productive approach to raising revenue.

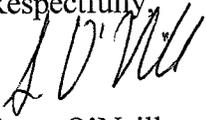
Our organization is made up of people who have successfully returned to the community, and who are working hard to help others do the same. None of us would have been successful in our return, had we not had strong ties to family. Meanwhile, we all know someone in jail who gradually lost touch with family members over time, as the cost and difficulty of staying close took its toll. Too often, our colleagues became isolated, depressed, and unable to effectively think about or plan their lives after incarceration. This is a recipe for disaster.

In contrast to Massachusetts’ approach, we recently learned that Connecticut has recently launched a pilot program which allows inmates a certain number of *free* calls each month, with the goal of facilitating a smoother transition to the community. This is a wise approach to re-entry, and one of many steps that other states are taking to reduce long-term prison costs by facilitating effective re-entry up front. We hope you will consider implementing such a program in the Commonwealth, and in the

meantime, rein in the rates charged by Global Tel Link, Securus/Evercom, and Inmate Calling Solutions.

Telephone companies should not be able to enjoy above average profits from inmate calls, guaranteed by a state-sanctioned monopoly, and the state should not benefit financially from collusion in such a scheme. In the long-run, we taxpayers will spend far more to re-incarcerate someone who left prison with no community ties than we save by collecting large taxes on inmate calls.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. O'Neill", written over the word "Respectfully,".

Steve O'Neill
Executive Director