

Department of Legislative Services
Maryland General Assembly
2023 Session

FISCAL AND POLICY NOTE
Third Reader - Revised

Senate Bill 257

(Senators Waldstreicher and Carter)

Judicial Proceedings

Judiciary

**Task Force to Assess the Viability for No-Charge Phone Calls for State
Incarcerated Individuals (Keeping Families Connected Act of 2023)**

This bill establishes the Task Force to Assess the Viability for No-Charge Phone Calls for State Incarcerated Individuals. The task force must (1) analyze data related to no-charge prison phone call programs in other states; (2) evaluate the projected program cost to the State of Maryland; and (3) evaluate and make recommendations to allow for phone calls to be made without charge by individuals confined in State correctional facilities while minimizing financial cost to the State. The Department of Legislative Services (DLS) must provide staff for the task force. Task force members may not receive compensation but are entitled to reimbursement for expenses. By December 31, 2023, the task force must report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly. **The bill takes effect June 1, 2023, and terminates June 30, 2024.**

Fiscal Summary

State Effect: Any expense reimbursements for task force members and staffing costs for DLS are assumed to be minimal and absorbable within existing budgeted resources. No effect on revenues.

Local Effect: None.

Small Business Effect: None.

Analysis

Current Law: Under statute, funds generated from inmate calls are deposited into the inmate welfare funds, special funds in each State correctional facility that are used by the

facility for items benefiting the inmate population, including education and vocational training and support of the inmate grievance process.

Additional Comments: The Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services advises that the current contract for inmate calls is not a revenue-generating source for the department; thus, since fiscal 2016, no funds from inmate calls have been deposited into inmate welfare funds.

Additional Information

Prior Introductions: Similar legislation has not been introduced within the last three years.

Designated Cross File: None.

Information Source(s): Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services;
Department of Legislative Services

Fiscal Note History: First Reader - February 10, 2023
km/lgc Third Reader - March 15, 2023
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Analysis by: Shirleen M. E. Pilgrim

Direct Inquiries to:
(410) 946-5510
(301) 970-5510