

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee**,

This testimony is being submitted by Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore. We are also working in collaboration with Out 4 Justice.

I am a resident of District 45. **I am testifying in support of HB0401 - State Correctional Facilities - Incarcerated Individuals - Costs of Telephone Communications.**



Showing Up for Racial Justice

When my brother was incarcerated for crimes related to his disability and struggles with addiction, my family and I kept up his spirits by taking turns calling him every day. Since my parents were solidly middle class, they were able to route funds to him to cover the high cost of the phone calls. My brother was glad for the support, but after a few weeks, it began to wear on him that so many of his incarcerated peers didn't have connections and family who could afford such luxuries as daily phone calls and care packages. Many had lost all support from friends and family on the outside after years of feeling like a financial burden. I can't imagine losing touch with my brother because I didn't have funds to cover phone calls, but this is a reality for so many incarcerated people who come from backgrounds of generational poverty and disability.

People in prison don't have their choice of service providers, but they and their families pay all the costs. This has resulted in a monopoly system where phone providers charge unfair and excessive fees amounting to 48 cents per 15-minute call for state prisons¹, and up to \$3.15 per 15-minute call for local jails². These companies are shamefully exploiting incarcerated people and their families and depriving incarcerated people of their support systems, which are not only necessary for rehabilitation, but also a fundamental human need and right.

HB0401 would protect incarcerated people and their families from predatory pricing by making the facilities themselves responsible for the cost of providing telephone service to inmates. While this will initially raise costs for the state, this change will incentivize negotiation for better rates, which would lower costs. In the long run, this relatively small cost increase for the state will reap dividends by reducing the financial burden on the families of inmates - who are often impoverished themselves - and decreasing recidivism by fostering positive family and community ties for incarcerated people.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in support of HB0401 - State Correctional Facilities - Incarcerated Individuals - Costs of Telephone Communications.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,
Brytani Fraser
3211 Moravia rd.
Baltimore, MD 21214
Member of Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore

¹ State of Phone Justice 2022, Prison Policy Initiative, Appendix Table 1: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/appendices2022_1.html

² *Id.*, Appendix Table 3: https://www.prisonpolicy.org/phones/appendices2022_3.html