



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 401 (HB401) and its cross-file, Senate Bill 56 (SB0056) – Incarcerated Individuals – Costs of Telephone Communications. This legislation mandates that the state cover the cost of phone calls between incarcerated individuals and their families in Maryland state prisons. By eliminating the financial burden of communication, HB401/SB0056 promotes stronger family connections, supports rehabilitation, and reduces recidivism—key factors in creating a more just and equitable criminal justice system.

Maryland's incarcerated population is 71% Black, meaning that the cost of prison phone calls disproportionately harms Black families. Excessive fees for telephone communication place an undue financial strain on Black Marylanders, many of whom already face economic hardship. The ability to stay connected with loved ones is crucial for mental health, successful reentry, and maintaining ties to children and community support networks. By eliminating these costs, HB401/SB0056 directly benefits Black Marylanders, ensuring that families are not forced to choose between financial stability and staying in touch with their incarcerated relatives. Studies consistently show that incarcerated individuals who maintain strong family connections are less likely to reoffend, making this bill not only a matter of fairness but also a critical step in reducing incarceration rates and improving public safety.

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland has long fought against systemic inequities that disproportionately impact Black communities. HB401/SB0056 aligns with our mission to promote racial justice and economic equity by removing a barrier that has long penalized Black families. By ensuring no-cost communication for incarcerated individuals, this bill upholds the dignity of Black Marylanders, strengthens families, and supports successful reintegration into society.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland strongly supports HB401/SB0056.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland