

Roberta DiMezza

From: Rebecca Shays <rebeccarshays@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, April 11, 2024 5:06 PM
To: House Judiciary Committee
Subject: Support House Bill 7525

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To the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Rebecca, I'm a resident and native to Providence, RI. I'm emailing with regard to this evening's hearing surrounding House Bill 7525:

As legislators, it is your responsibility to protect our children, families, and communities, as well as the staff inside correctional facilities. But prison telecom, Securus Technologies, is charging Rhode Island families exorbitant rates to stay connected with their incarcerated loved ones, and it's hurting public safety.

This exploitation is not just separating families, including children and their parents, but negatively impacting correctional staff too. Incarcerated people who are in contact with their community are more likely to have hope, participate in rehabilitative programs, engage in positive behaviors while inside, and reenter society successfully upon release. Making communication free is the most cost-effective, evidence-based program a prison could institute.

House Bill 7525 would provide people incarcerated in Rhode Island prisons and their families free communication services, and I urge you to support it. We should be encouraging communication and connecting families, not exploiting it and tearing them apart and jeopardizing our public safety in doing so. It's neither humane nor smart.

Please act now to protect our families and public safety. It's time to stop overcharging families and their incarcerated loved ones to stay in touch, especially when these connections have such clear benefits for us all. The federal system as well as several states and counties nationwide have already taken this important step with great success, including California, Colorado, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Minnesota. Many others are currently considering it because the benefits are clear.

Please sponsor H7525 and support a reasonable budget allocation of \$500,000 for the bills on behalf of our neighbors and community today.

Thank you for taking the time to read my communication.

Rebecca Shays (she/her)