
SENATE BILL 5231

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senators Hansen, Frame, Hasegawa, Nobles, Pedersen, Valdez, and C. Wilson

Read first time 01/14/25. Referred to Committee on Human Services.

1 AN ACT Relating to reducing fees and expenses for services for
2 people confined in state facilities; amending RCW 72.09.765; adding a
3 new section to chapter 72.01 RCW; creating a new section; and
4 providing an effective date.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

6 NEW SECTION. **Sec. 1.** A new section is added to chapter 72.01
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The department shall provide persons in its custody and
9 confined in a state facility with voice communication services. The
10 department may supplement voice communication service with other
11 communication services including, but not limited to, video
12 communication and electronic mail or messaging services. To the
13 extent such voice communication service or any other communication
14 service is provided, which shall not be limited beyond program
15 participation and routine facility procedures, each such service
16 shall be provided free of charge to the person initiating and the
17 person receiving the communication. The department shall at least
18 maintain the same access to voice communication services and other
19 communication services in each state facility as the department
20 offered as of January 1, 2025.

1 (2) The department shall not receive revenue, including any
2 commission or fee, from the provision of voice communication services
3 or any other communication services to any person confined in a state
4 facility.

5 (3) The department shall not use the provision of voice
6 communication services or any other communication services to persons
7 in its custody and confined in a state facility to supplant in-person
8 contact visits that any such person may be eligible to receive.
9 Communication services shall not be used to replace the in-person
10 visitation program.

11 (4) The department of corrections shall:

12 (a) Provide tablets to all persons in its custody at no cost; and

13 (b) Maintain the same number of voice communication devices,
14 specifically wall phones, in each housing unit as it had on January
15 1, 2025.

16 (5) If the department of children, youth, and families provides
17 tablets to persons in its custody, the tablets shall be provided at
18 no cost to the person.

19 (6) For the purposes of this section:

20 (a) "Voice communication services" means real-time, audio-only
21 communication services, namely phone calls.

22 (b) "Other communication services" means communication services
23 other than voice communications including, but not limited to, video
24 communication and electronic mail or messaging services.

25 (c) "Confined" or "confinement" means incarcerated or detained in
26 a correctional institution as defined in RCW 9.94.049 under the
27 custody of the department of corrections or department of children,
28 youth, and families.

29 (d) "Department" means the department of corrections and
30 department of children, youth, and families.

31 **Sec. 2.** RCW 72.09.765 and 2020 c 319 s 4 are each amended to
32 read as follows:

33 (1) Any contract to provide (~~inmates~~) incarcerated individuals
34 with (~~access to~~) telecommunication services and electronic media
35 services in state correctional facilities shall be made publicly
36 available and posted on the department's website.

37 (2) The information in this subsection from the contract shall be
38 prominently displayed on the department's public website, posted
39 prominently in housing units, and made available on tablets:

1 (a) Rates for ~~((facilitating telecommunication services~~
2 ~~including, but not limited to, phone calls, video visitation,~~
3 ~~videograms and video clips, emails, and accessing music and~~
4 ~~entertainment)) all products and services covered by the contract,~~
5 ~~with a detailed breakdown that includes taxes, surcharges, fees, and~~
6 ~~any other fees;~~

7 (b) Fees charged for money transfers and transactions,
8 maintenance of financial accounts, and any other fee charged to the
9 user to facilitate the money transfer or online deposit account; and

10 (c) All fees or costs charged to the ~~((inmate))~~ incarcerated
11 individual or customer in exchange for use of ~~((telecommunication~~
12 ~~or))~~ electronic media services through the contract.

13 (3) By July 1st of each year, the contractor that provides
14 ~~((inmates))~~ incarcerated individuals with ~~((access to))~~
15 telecommunication services and electronic media services under
16 subsection (1) of this section shall report to the department the
17 following information:

18 (a) A summary of services offered at each correctional facility;

19 (b) Rates charged for, or associated with, providing each type of
20 service including, but not limited to, monthly financial account
21 maintenance fees, transaction fees associated with money transfers,
22 ~~((per call and connection surcharges,))~~ bill statement fees, and
23 refund fees;

24 (c) ~~((A total accounting of commissions provided to the~~
25 ~~department or correctional facility;~~

26 ~~(d))~~ A detailed summary and accounting of services used by
27 ~~((inmates))~~ incarcerated individuals categorized as indigent;

28 (d) Data on usage of all telecommunications and electronic media
29 services under the contract, including monthly call and message
30 volume;

31 (e) One-time and ongoing costs incurred for installing and
32 maintaining hardware;

33 (f) Average customer service response time rates per facility and
34 the average time taken to resolve an issue or provide a refund for
35 defective services; and

36 (g) An accounting of all revenues or losses incurred by the
37 contractor by quarter.

38 (4) By November 1st of each year, and in compliance with RCW
39 43.01.036, the department shall report to the governor and
40 legislature on contracts for telecommunication services and

1 electronic media services under this section and the contractor's
2 annual compliance with this section.

3 (5) This section applies to any contract in effect on June 11,
4 2020, and to any renegotiation, renewal, or extension of such
5 contract.

6 (6) For the purposes of this section:

7 (a) "Telecommunications services" include, but are not limited
8 to, voice communication services, video communication services,
9 videograms, and electronic mail or messaging services.

10 (b) "Electronic media services" include, but are not limited to,
11 video clips, music, and entertainment.

12 NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. This act may be known and cited as the
13 connecting families act.

14 NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. This act takes effect December 1, 2025.

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