

Helen Faredes
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TO: William F. Canton, Acting Secretary

RE: CC Docket No. 92-77

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I am writing in regard to CC Docket NO. 92-77. I support CURE's positions in this matter. I am also writing to let you know of my personal position in this matter.

I am married to an incarcerated person and I receive collect phone calls from him almost daily and more on the weekends. My collect phone bill portion each month is between \$300 and \$350. Part of this monthly fee is 2.90 per call just for being collect from an institution regardless of how many minutes we talk. That averages out to approximately \$150 a month just for accepting the collect calls, based on the number of calls I accept from my husband. That does not include the minute charges they put on top of that fee. Those are certainly more than the usual long distance minute charges.

The institutions have it set up so that we can only talk 15 minutes per call, however they can call back unlimited times if the phones are available. So that means that every time we get cut off after 15 minutes and he calls back, I get charged another 2.90 for accepting the call. On the weekends a typical day costs \$25 to talk for approximately 75 minutes. That is because that means 5 calls, each with the surcharge at 15 minutes each. That's not a lot of time to talk to your spouse, but it is a lot of money. The typical 15 minute weekend call is 4.82 plus tax makes it 5.25 per call. The typical evening call is a total of 5.86. And if you have to accept a call during the day for some reason, it is 6.88. I have all of my phone bills for this year and previous years if you would like to see the actual break downs of these calls. I am not exaggerating these costs to you.

Also, I have no say so on the carrier that is used because I am across LATA lines or something. So, I get billed for using a different long distance company than the one I chose for my phone service. This created a unique problem when my first bill rose over \$150 upon my husband's transfer to this location. The long distance carrier, which I did not have, blocked my receiving collect calls. When I checked into it, I was told they had not background (credit) information on me since I wasn't a customer of their's. They said that a flag was put on my account and until that bill was paid I could get no more collect phone calls. Now, they hadn't sent me a bill to pay and they couldn't tell me how to pay it until I received a bill. So, basically they controlled my life by doing this and I was furious. I took 3 days and several phone calls to management people of this company (Sprint) to get them to do a credit check on me and see that I paid my phone bills each month and that I could indeed be trusted to accept and pay for these calls. In the mean time I could not talk to my husband. This happened again, same company (Sprint) because for some reason they didn't get it all straightened out internally. It happened again, approximately a month after the first time. I went straight to the management numbers this time. I even asked for the regulatory services that controlled them. I was, of course, not given that information. I offered to keep money on deposit with them so that service would not be interrupted again. They didn't even apologize.

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It is really sad that transfers of inmates, something we have no control over, affect the way we can communicate and the price it costs for that communication. It is also sad the communication is interrupted and dependent upon a person to input a PIN number and phone numbers correctly into the system that only benefits the Department of Corrections. We also experienced a situation where the person who enters phone numbers and the PIN numbers was on vacation so we had to wait 7 days for that to happen. Then the person entered some of the numbers wrong and we had to wait another 4 days for that to be corrected. My husband is incarcerated at the largest walled prison in the world, the State Prison of Southern Michigan. What this means is that problems are more frequent and less taken care of than anywhere else. It also means that communication with him is extremely important. There is life threatening danger there everyday and mail takes approximately a week to reach him and approximately 4 days to reach me from him. Phone calls are the only way we know that he is okay from a day to day basis. They have limited visits to the point of 5 per month so phone calls are the only way we can communicate in a timely manner.

During those so important phone calls that are only allowed to last 15 minutes, the operator/recording comes on at least 6 times to inform you that this call is coming from a Michigan Correctional Facility. Then it comes on to tell you when you have 2 minutes left and to tell you the call will be terminated in 30 seconds. Every one of these interruptions can not be talked over either. We have tried to just talk through them but you can not hear the other person. The phone calls are identified before you even accept them as being from a Michigan Correctional Facility and that they may be listened to or even recorded. Why do you have to be subjected to these continual interruptions and the 15 minute cut off after you are informed of it before you even accept the call? And, sometimes their equipment malfunctions and the recording continues or you get cut off at 5 minutes or whatever malfunction it might be. And, of course they don't allow any corrections to the bills for those company errors.

I understand that the Department of Corrections in Michigan receives monies from the phone companies for these collect calls that we are billed for. I do not understand why, nor was I consulted or given the option as to which company I chose to do business with based on the amount of money they give back to the Department of Corrections. The Department of Corrections says this money goes into their General Fund. There is a real problem with that theory - only tax money goes into the General Fund and it can't be allocated to cover specific expenses. Well, if they get money from my phone calls, why do I pay so much for them in the first place? The Department doesn't do anything to maintain the equipment of the service. Is that why we can only talk 15 minutes? So the Department gets more money as well as the phone companies? I sure would like to know those answers. I am paying for the service, yet I am not the consumer here, the Department of Corrections seems to be the consumer and making the decisions that I pay for.

The bottom line is that I can not give up talking to my husband. The price is exorbitant and obviously lining the pockets of someone else quite well. If there is anything you can do about these issues I would certainly appreciate it. ANYTHING AT ALL!!! If you need details or proof of the charges and the times or amounts, I would be happy to supply you with copies of my phone bills.

Thank you for listening. Also, if you could tell me of any local authority I could write to concerning these issues, I would appreciate that as well.

Sincerely,

Helen Paredes

Holly Drobil
194 Frontenac St.
Haskell, Michigan 48843

August 14, 1996

DOCKET FILE COPY ORIGINAL

William F. Caton
Acting Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street N.W.
Ste. 222
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Docket # 92-77

Dear Mr. Caton

I am writing to voice my support for the Billed Party Preference System for collect calls from Correctional Facilities.

Recently in Michigan the Department of Corrections implemented a phone system that cuts the calls off after 15 minutes. During that 15 minute period, I am charged for 110 seconds to connect the call and I am interrupted seven times during the call my husband can only hear two of the interruptions so he constantly has to repeat himself. When I complained to U.S. Sprint they said nothing could be done. Each 15 minute call costs between \$5.66 and \$7.42 depending on the time the call was made.

My husband and I have been together for twelve years. The Department of Corrections has transferred him many times. Our phone calls are extremely important to us but have had to be cut down because of the added charges for the department of Corrections to force ~~tap~~ my telephone calls.

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I wish someone would cap the cost of collect calls, or make it mandatory that prisoners be

given a calling card by a family member. The Michigan Department of Corrections receives kick backs from the telephone company of approximately \$8 million dollar per year. Money taken from one income households most of whom are at or below poverty already

Not only did the department start tapping the phone lines for which I am billed they also cut the visits drastically. The facility where my husband is housed had unlimited weekday visits they have been cut to five per month. I like to talk to my partner and I would like to be able to afford to talk to him more often. My current monthly phone bill is between \$150.00 and 260.00, money I could be using for a more dependable vehicle but that I choose to use to keep in contact with the most important person in my life.

Would you please consider helping the families of incarcerated men and women keep in touch with their loved ones at a reasonable cost?

Sincerely,

Sherry D. D. D.