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My name is Rev. Deborah Lee. I am the Director of the Interfaith Coalition for Immigrant Rights (CLUE) based in Northern California. Over the past 2 years, we have helped to convene a Taskforce of community agencies and stakeholders providing services, advocacy and support to immigrants detained in the West County Detention Facility in Contra Costa County, CA. This county jail maintains a contract with the Department of Homeland Security to house detainees for Immigration Customs and Enforcement (ICE). These detainees include recently arrived asylum seekers, long-term residents facing deportation, and green card holders. For nearly 4 years, we have held a monthly prayer service in front of the jail, providing support and outreach to the the families of immigrants (and others) detained there.

In the course of this time, we have talked to numerous family members entering and exiting visiting hours. We have provided a listening ear, conducted surveys about their needs. We have noted their requests for prayers. It became very clear that one of the primary complaints, burdens and stresses that they carried was the extremely high cost of phone calls, the extra fees and charges, dropped calls, causing additional "reconnection" fees. Their stories were countless and reiterated the same experiences and frustration:

"On New Year's Day I deposited \$25 so that I could talk to my husband since it was the holiday time. By the time we got connected, the \$25 was already down to \$17. I spoke 5-8 minutes and the \$17 was gone. They are ripping people off. I am a professional and have a good job. But it's a rip off. That's why I don't talk to him that often." - Dierdre M.

"The fees and rates are ridiculous. It charges even when the call is not answered. You can have a negative balance even though it is prepaid. Sometimes payments are not even applied." - Lelani S.

It was clear that families (many women with children), already dealing with the loss of a breadwinner due to immigrant detention or incarceration, were undergoing even more financial hardship just to maintain contact with a co-parent or a child, and passing on important information regarding immigration proceedings. Under the Department of Homeland Security's own 2011 ICE detention guidelines, reasonable phone rates are an important criteria. But the detainees held in county jails encounter phone rates that are far from reasonable.

For the past 18 months, we as a community coalition have tried through the democratic process to achieve lower phone rates for inmates at our county jail as the current contract with Global-Tel Link had expired and a new RFP was underway. We met with supervisors, attended monthly meetings of the Public Protection Committee, met with the Sheriff on several occasions, gathered letters and signatures. Even so, the RFP for the new telecommunications contract, did not address our primary issue of consumer affordability. It continued in the same logic that higher phone rates and fees, would lead to higher commissions and revenue for the county. It became clear to us that on their own, the county and Sheriff's department would not wean itself from the lucrative phone profit revenue stream unfairly shouldered by the family members of detained immigrants and some of the poorest families in our community.

We strongly urge the FCC to go forward with these rulings such as the rate cap and the elimination of fees and extra charges. This will bring some sense of basic fairness into the system and much welcome relief to many families who find just staying in touch far too expensive and additionally punitive.

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