
SUBSTITUTE SENATE BILL 5231

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senate Human Services (originally sponsored by Senators Hansen, Frame, Hasegawa, Nobles, Pedersen, Valdez, and C. Wilson)

READ FIRST TIME 02/06/25.

1 AN ACT Relating to reducing fees and expenses for services for
2 people confined in state correctional facilities; amending RCW
3 72.09.765; adding a new section to chapter 72.09 RCW; creating a new
4 section; and 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 72.09
7 RCW to read as follows:

8 (1) The department shall provide persons in its custody and
9 confined in a state correctional facility with voice communication
10 services. Voice communication services shall be provided free of
11 charge to the person initiating and the person receiving the
12 communication. Voice communication services shall not be limited
13 beyond program participation and routine facility procedures. The
14 department shall at least maintain the same access to voice
15 communication services in each correctional facility as the
16 department offered as of January 1, 2025.

17 (2) The department shall not receive revenue, including any
18 commission or fee, from the provision of voice communication services
19 to any person confined in a state correctional facility.

20 (3) The department shall not use the provision of voice
21 communication services to persons in its custody and confined in a

1 state correctional facility to supplant in-person contact visits that
2 any such person may be eligible to receive. Communication services
3 shall not be used to replace the in-person visitation program.

4 (4) (a) The department shall:

5 (i) Provide tablets to all persons in its custody at no cost; and

6 (ii) Maintain the same number of voice communication devices,
7 specifically wall phones, in each housing unit as it had on January
8 1, 2025.

9 (b) (i) The department may not replace a tablet that is broken due
10 to malicious or intentional damage by a person in its custody until
11 after 90 days, unless the person pays the department to replace the
12 tablet.

13 (ii) If a tablet is used by a confined person in the furtherance
14 of a crime, the individual shall lose access to the tablet pursuant
15 to policies established by the department.

16 (5) The department may not limit or interrupt the duration of
17 voice communication services provided through tablets or other
18 individualized devices issued to persons in its custody. The
19 department may limit the duration of voice communication services
20 provided through wall phones.

21 (6) For the purposes of this section:

22 (a) "Tablets" means individualized electronic devices that are
23 enabled for voice or other communication services, or both. These
24 devices may include other services, such as media or entertainment
25 services.

26 (b) "Voice communication services" means real-time, audio-only
27 communication services, namely phone calls.

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

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

34 (2) The information in this subsection from the contract shall be
35 prominently displayed on the department's public website, posted
36 prominently in housing units with printed copies available in each
37 housing unit, and made available on law library computers:

38 (a) Rates for (~~facilitating telecommunication services~~
39 ~~including, but not limited to, phone calls, video visitation,~~

1 ~~videograms and video clips, emails, and accessing music and~~
2 ~~entertainment))~~ all products and services covered by the contract,
3 with a detailed breakdown that includes taxes, surcharges, fees, and
4 any other fees;

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

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

11 (3) By July 1st of each year, the contractor that provides
12 ~~((inmates))~~ incarcerated individuals with ~~((access to))~~
13 telecommunication services and electronic media services under
14 subsection (1) of this section shall report to the department the
15 following information, which must be posted prominently on the
16 department's public website:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

37 (4) By November 1st of each year, and in compliance with RCW
38 43.01.036, the department shall report to the governor and
39 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 new contract and to any contract
4 in effect on June 11, 2020, and to any renegotiation, renewal,
5 modification, or extension of such 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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