

Keeping Families Connected through No Cost Calls: Toolkit for Letters to the Editor

Thank you for supporting free phone calls for people in prison and jail and their loved ones! We've shared a template below. Try to keep your letter to 250 words or less. Local papers generally publish letters from residents of the area (for example, Arlington residents for The Arlington Advocate) and local papers will publish letters about whatever is on your mind – not just in response to an article in the paper.

The best letter is personal to you. If you can put things in your own words, or share your own ideas or experiences, that will make your letter even more compelling. However, no direct experience is required. Everyone can write a letter even if you have no direct experience being incarcerated or trying to stay in touch with an incarcerated friend or family member.

[Find your legislators here](#) so you can encourage readers of your letter to contact them by filling in this part of the letters below: **(Sen./Rep. X) can be reached at # or X@X.X).**

Please check out our suggestions below & find information on [featured papers here](#).

Choose one or more of the bullet points below to make your letter the right length, or explain your own reasons. You can also incorporate the bullet points wherever you want to in your letter.

To the Editor:

Many people likely don't know that families of incarcerated people in Massachusetts have been spending an estimated \$14 million a year to stay in touch by phone. Even worse, Sheriffs and the Department of Correction make millions of dollars in "kickbacks" from corporate contracts, creating an incentive to contract for these extra-expensive phone services. Thankfully, advocates and elected officials are fighting to end this policy.

Bills S. 1559 and H. 1900 would provide telephone calls at no cost to incarcerated people in all state prisons, county jails, and houses of correction. I support this legislation because:

- This unjust practice has continued for too long in Massachusetts. Already, cities and states, including Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, New York, and Connecticut, have passed similar laws, and we now have the opportunity to do the same.
- Barriers to communicating with loved ones, such as the high cost of phone calls, make it harder for people to maintain the relationships that help them to stay out of prison in the future.
- Many studies show that contact with loved ones promotes successful return to the community and helps keep people from going back to prison.
- The well-being of incarcerated people and their families should take precedence over corporate profits.
- The financial burden of these calls is particularly hard on low-income people. As a result, one in three families with a loved one in prison will go into debt to maintain regular contact with incarcerated relatives.

- Too many families have to choose between paying the phone bill and the heating bill.
- The Massachusetts Democratic Party platform calls for free phone calls for incarcerated people.

You can help Massachusetts families stay connected by contacting your legislators and voicing your support. (Sen./Rep. X) can be reached at # or X@X.X).

Sign your name, address, and phone number

[The newspaper will not publish your phone number]

For more information: Our testimony [toolkit](#) and the [Prisoners' Legal Services fact sheet](#) have even more information if you want to learn more about this issue.

You can also [watch our briefing](#), featuring directly affected advocates and our bill sponsors.