



State of Connecticut
DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

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Testimony of Benedict R. Daigle, Deputy Assistant Public Defender
Office of Chief Public Defender

Committee on Judiciary - March 22, 2021

Raised S.B. 972

An Act Concerning the Cost of Telecommunications Services in Correctional Facilities

The Office of Chief Public Defender supports *S.B. 972, An Act Concerning the Cost of Telecommunications Services in Correctional Facilities*, as the bill reflects the research- and commonsense- driven preservation of in-person contact visits and the alignment of operational incentives with people's successful rehabilitation and return to the community.

Supportive connections with family and friends are critical to one's physical and emotional well-being. People who are or have been incarcerated, and their loved ones, know that this truth applies even - especially - behind prison walls. Those without firsthand knowledge may imagine based on their own experience of isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and the troubling mental health and physical health trends which have unfolded. Telecommunications may supplement in-person contact visits, but nothing can replace them.

In this policy context, as in so many, children merit special attention. While every relationship is unique, research shows the benefits of ensuring that children maintain strong bonds with their parents who are incarcerated on unrelated charges or convictions.¹ The same holds true when a youth is incarcerated.² In-person contact visits promote such bonds and correlate with fewer negative incidents during incarceration and better outcomes after a person's release.

Lastly, if a system is tasked not with punishment alone, but with rehabilitation and healing as well, then it must not unduly extract from those it purports to serve.

Thank you for considering OCPD's perspective on this legislation.

¹ See, e.g., the work of the Connecticut Children with Incarcerated Parents (CTCIP) Initiative, <http://ctcip.org/>.

² See, e.g., Casey Family Programs, What are the benefits of family visitation for crossover youth? (2018), available at <https://www.casey.org/what-are-the-benefits-of-family-visitation-for-crossover-youth/>.