

**Law Offices of Howard Friedman, P.C.**

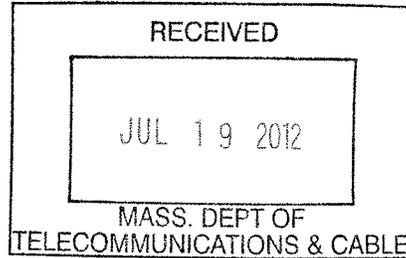
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The Law Offices of Howard Friedman submits to the Department of Telecommunications and Cable this statement regarding prison telephone rates and quality of service.

The Law Offices of Howard Friedman is a civil rights firm that brings lawsuits, including class action lawsuits, on behalf of prisoners. We have numerous clients incarcerated across the state. The telephone is the most practical way for us to communicate with our clients. Our work depends upon reliable phone access with prisoners. Prisoners depend on the phone to inform us of important developments and to seek legal advice in a timely manner. However, the service we pay for—and we pay extravagantly—is not reliable. Calls are occasionally dropped. The connection is frequently poor. Sometimes our clients sound impossibly quiet. Other times there is constant static on the line. We often ask prisoners to hang up and try calling again. Sometimes this solves the problem, sometimes it doesn't.

The high cost of prisoner phone calls places burdens on attorneys, prisoners, and in some instances all taxpayers. The cost imposes yet another financial disincentive—and there are many—for private attorneys to represent prisoners, whose civil legal needs are greatly underserved. Because prisoners are typically liable for the costs of a lawsuit when it is successful, any recovery they obtain is reduced by the amount of phone costs incurred. In some cases, such as civil rights cases in which the prisoner prevails, the costs of the litigation are borne by the government that funds the prison being sued. In other words, taxpayers foot the bill.

The phone is one of the primary ways prisoners connect with their loved ones. For prisoners, better communication means better commitment to their communities. It encourages rehabilitation. Our office is concerned that the prohibitive cost and poor quality of phone service punishes families as well as prisoners.