

SAMPLE LETTER TO THE FCC

Marlene H. Dortch, Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Re: Wright Alternative Rulemaking Proposal
C.C. Docket 96-128

Dear Ms. Dortch:

I live in _____ (City/County and State) where I receive collect calls from (___ family member) who is in the (correctional facility). Currently I pay _____ for a twenty minute call. I am also charged fees to open a prepaid account and to process my payments. I enclose a copy of some of my phone bills to illustrate how expensive these charges are.

The costs of calls from incarcerated loved ones create a very real problem – (describe your family situation and the importance of maintaining contact with your loved one).

It seems clear that the primary reason rates are so high is because of the commissions paid by prison phone service providers to correctional facilities. I believe these commissions are an unfair tax on families of inmates, including many who cannot afford these outrageous (or excessive, or exorbitant, or painfully high, or whatever words you believe best describes the) rates.

It is my understanding that a recent cost study submitted by prison phone service companies has determined a "fair rate" that eliminates commissions, covers legitimate costs and provides a reasonable return for prison phone companies while dramatically reducing call rates.

There is an immediate need for national regulation of a nation-wide prison phone industry which exploits vulnerable consumers shamelessly. The FCC has legal authority to provide industry oversight. This authority can be found at 47 U.S.C. § 276(b)(1)(A)(requiring the FCC to ensure fair compensation for each and every completed call) and 47 U.S.C. § 201(b)(requiring that all telephone charges and practices must be "just and reasonable").

In the responsible exercise of its duty, the FCC should) prohibit the payment of "commissions," and eliminate all other means (such as hidden fees) to unjustifiably inflate the cost of prisoner phone calls; require prison phone companies to offer the broadest possible range of calling options at fair and reasonable rates; and adopt cost-based, "benchmark" rates (which will provide a measurement of whether rates are fair and reasonable) for *all* intra-state and inter-state prisoner collect, pre-paid, and debit telephone calls. The benchmark rates should cover legitimate costs

and provide a reasonable rate of return to prison phone providers so that there will be incentives for businesses to provide these services.

Finally, the FCC should leave jurisdiction with the state public utilities commissions to decide requests for deviations from established benchmark rates when a service provider claims that a remote location or other considerations require an adjustment to make the provision of prisoner phone services feasible.

My hope is that this proceeding will result in fair and reasonable rates for the widest possible range of prisoner-initiated telephone calls. Please make sure fair rates will be made available to all inmate families everywhere.

Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Your Name Here

Note: In several places there are blank lines followed by information that would help the FCC better understand your concerns. If you decide to use this letter or a modified version of the letter, please be sure to remove those lines and the information immediately following, as well as this note. However, the FCC will pay far more attention to an original letter than to one that appears to be a form letter. Thank you for your interest and your help.