



Legislation Text

File #: Res 1341-2020, **Version:** *

Res. No. 1341

Resolution calling on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.7658A/S.6276, in relation to providing telephone calls to persons incarcerated in state correctional facilities at no cost.

By Council Members Powers, Grodenchik and Chin

Whereas, In 2018, New York City passed Local Law 144, providing telephone calls at no cost to individuals in custody in city correctional facilities, which was implemented in 2019; and

Whereas, According to a May 1, 2020 fact sheet from the New York State Department of Corrections and Community Supervision (DOCCS), 40,956 people are currently incarcerated in a DOCCS facility; and

Whereas, 16,670 of those incarcerated in a DOCCS facility are New York City residents; and

Whereas, New York City residents imprisoned in a New York State correctional facility are not covered by Local Law 144, and must still bear the costs of telephone calls; and

Whereas, Numerous studies have demonstrated that maintaining regular contact with family members while in prison can drastically reduce the likelihood of recidivism; and

Whereas, The cost of telephone calls can be highly burdensome to inmates and their families, as a 2015 survey from the Prison Policy Initiative found that 34% of families surveyed had gone into debt to cover telephone and visitation-related costs; and

Whereas, A.7658-A, sponsored by State Assembly Member Harvey Epstein, and its companion bill S.6276, sponsored by State Senator Jamaal T. Bailey, would eliminate the cost of phone calls for those imprisoned in state correctional facilities; and

Whereas, On March 14, 2020, Governor Andrew M. Cuomo implemented restrictions on visitations to state correctional facilities, in order to reduce in-person contact in light of the COVID-19 pandemic; and

Whereas, The Federal Bureau of Prisons began providing free telephone calls to all inmates in all of the 122 federal facilities it oversees as of April 9, 2020; and

Whereas, By similarly providing free telephone calls in DOCCS correctional facilities, the State of New York would help persons incarcerated in these facilities by offering them a method of maintaining contact with their families, particularly while visitation continues to be restricted; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls on the New York State Legislature to pass, and the Governor to sign, A.7658A/S.6276, in relation to providing telephone calls to persons incarcerated in state correctional facilities at no cost.

LS #11722
5/12/20
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