



Legislation Text

File #: Res 0765-2005, **Version:** *

Res. No. 765

Resolution calling upon the New York State Department of Correctional Services to end MCI's exorbitant and exclusive telephone contract, which forces inmates to pay a per-call connection fee of \$3.00 plus sixteen cents a minute when calling family or friends, and to instead provide just and reasonably priced calling options for inmates.

By Council Members Foster, Barron, Clarke, Gerson, Jackson, James, Lopez, Martinez, Palma, Quinn, Reed, Sanders, Seabrook and Stewart

Whereas, Inmates from New York City are often incarcerated hundreds of miles from their families, friends, and communities, and can only make telephone calls to outside parties through collect calling; and

Whereas, In 1996, New York State granted MCI an exclusive contract to be the sole provider of the State's prison telephone service, which has resulted in unjust calling options and unjustifiably inflated prices for collect calls; and

Whereas, MCI charges inmates a \$3.00 per-call connection fee plus sixteen cents per minute, and the average inmate call of nineteen minutes costs \$6.04; and

Whereas, MCI inmate collect call rates are a startling 630% more than normal MCI consumer long distance rates of \$5.00 for a monthly service fee and five cents a minute, and an MCI phone card with 1000 minutes costs just \$29.99 with no per-call connection fee; and

Whereas, In 2002, inmates in New York State prisons made 7 million collect calls totaling more than 124 million minutes, generating gross revenues for MCI exceeding \$39 million and commissions for New York State of \$22.4 million, and generating gross revenues for MCI of \$175 million since 1996; and

Whereas, Ms. Patricia Allard, associate counsel of criminal justice at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law, recommended in a December 22, 2004 article in the New York

Amsterdam News, that New York State adopt just and reasonably priced calling options for incarcerated people and their families, including two other alternatives of an 800 toll-free number typically costing seven cents a minute which Federal prisons currently use for inmates to call their families, or a “debit calling” plan enabling a telephone company to manage debit accounts similar to the commissary accounts currently used by inmates for personal spending; now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the Council of the City of New York calls upon the New York State Department of Correctional Services to end MCI’s exorbitant and exclusive telephone contract, which forces inmates to pay a per-call connection fee of \$3.00 plus sixteen cents a minute when calling family or friends, and to instead provide just and reasonably priced calling options for inmates.

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