

ONE HUNDRED FIFTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION - 2018
COMMITTEE STATEMENT
LB776

Hearing Date: Thursday January 18, 2018
Committee On: Judiciary
Introducer: McCollister
One Liner: Provide requirements for inmate access to telephone or videoconferencing systems in county and city jails

Roll Call Vote - Final Committee Action:
Advanced to General File with amendment(s)

Vote Results:
Aye: 7 Senators Baker, Ebke, Halloran, Hansen, Krist, Morfeld, Pansing Brooks
Nay:
Absent: 1 Senator Chambers
Present Not Voting:

Verbal Testimony:

Proponents:	Representing:
Senator John McCollister	Introducer
Fran Kaye	self
Kellee Kucera Moreno	self
Julie Tse	Voices for Children
Amy Miller	ACLU of Nebraska
Sarah Newell	Nebraska State Bar Association
Ben Murray	self
Juneal Pratt	self
Joe Nigro	Lancaster County Public Defender
Katrina Thomas	National Association of Social Workers, ACLU, RAN

Opponents:	Representing:
Kerry Eagan	Lancaster County
Mark Foxall	Douglas County

Neutral:	Representing:
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Summary of purpose and/or changes:

LB 776 modifies the legal requirements for county and city jail inmates' access to means of communication with their families.

The bill includes prefatory language with legislative findings (1) that inmates should be able to have meaningful contact and communication with their families and loved ones, (2) that many such individuals are financially indigent, (3) that monopoly telephone service contracts have been awarded by cities and counties based on the revenue commissions anticipated by local officials, and (4) that these factors have resulted in jail telephone call prices being excessively high, placing a significant financial burden on the families of inmates.

The bill modifies duties for the Jail Standards Board. The bill requires the board to reevaluate at least annually its

standards relating to jail cleanliness, prisoner classification, bedding and diet, and other matters. The bill expands the scope of religious accommodation required for inmates from the provision of a Bible to "a Bible or other religious or spiritual material." It also provides that the Board rules shall address access to telephones or videoconferencing.

The bill provides new duties for county jails and city jails that they provide either prepaid or collect telephone systems, and communications systems that facilitate attorney-client conversations without charge and without monitoring. It forbids counties and cities from accepting or receiving revenue from such systems in excess of their reasonable operating costs, including any commission or bonus payment from the contract telecommunications provider.

Explanation of amendments:

AM1687 replaces the word "their" in two locations and replaces it with "an attorney or." This is to clarify that the intent of the bill is to facilitate communications with attorneys generally, not only an attorney who has already been retained as counsel in a particular matter.

Laura Ebke, Chairperson