



## IDOC PHONE ACCESS: FIXING AN UNINTENDED CONSEQUENCE

**“Menard is too far for my family to make the drive for a visit. We are primarily maintaining our family ties thru phone calls.”**

—*Inmate at Menard Correctional Center*

**Ninety-five percent of people incarcerated in state prisons return home**, according to *Bureau of Justice Statistics*. **Inmates who maintain familial relationships have lower recidivism rates**, according to a body of research dating back more than 40 years.

### **Problem:**

As phone calls have become more financially feasible for inmates in Illinois thanks to leadership in the Illinois General Assembly, **access to phones in many facilities has become a serious, and at times dangerous, issue**. There are not enough functioning phones and recreation time is too limited to for most people to make calls, inmates report. The Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) has pledged to address this issue, but reports of fights and other difficulties have increased during the past year.

IDOC recently reduced the time of each call as a solution, which only increases the difficulty of maintaining solid ties with family.

Restore Justice Illinois has received more than 200 letters on this issue.

- “The phones are the number one issue that causes fights.” —*Inmate at Western Correctional Center*
- “Many unreported fights, acts of extortion, increased gang activity, and quite frankly, some men are just not being able to use the phones at all.” —*Inmate at Hill Correctional Center*
- “We get day room twice each day for one hour. By it being close to thirty people and only four phones there is always an argument of some kind.” —*Inmate at Hill Correctional Center*

### **Solution:**

IDOC facilities should have at least one phone for every 10 inmates.

This will help inmates communicate with their loved ones and reduce conflict. This solution does not rely on increased movement or equipment purchased by inmates.



**SB 2540**

**Senate Sponsor:** Senator Mattie Hunter (D)

**Supporters:**

- Chicago Appleseed Fund for Justice
- Chicago Community Bond Fund
- Chicago Council of Lawyers
- Community Renewal Society
- Chicago Urban League
- Illinois Justice Project
- Restore Justice Illinois

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