



**PUBLIC REQUEST TO ADDRESS
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA**

Correspondence Received

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD

HILDA L. SOLIS
HOLLY J. MITCHELL
LINDSEY P. HORVATH
JANICE HAHN
KATHRYN BARGER

			The following individuals submitted comments on agenda item:	
Agenda #	Relate To	Position	Name	Comments
42.		Favor	Kevaughn R Harris	
		Oppose	TaMara Hill	
		Item Total	2	
Grand Total			2	



**Testimony in Opposition of the
Inmate Telephone System and Services Sole Source Agreement Amendment**

November 20, 2023

Dear Board of Supervisors for the County of Los Angeles in California,

My name is Ta'Mara Hill, and I am the Director of Policy Campaigns & Government Affairs at Worth Rises, a national non-profit dedicated to ending the exploitation of people impacted by incarceration. I submit this testimony in opposition of agenda item 42, the "Inmate Telephone System and Services Sole Source Agreement Amendment."

Thank you for taking time to hear from the public on the impact of prison communication costs and concerns about this proposed amendment. I hope you take particular note of the concerns of those who have been directly impacted by incarceration. I will focus my testimony, instead, on relevant fiscal insight and analysis.

At Worth Rises, we have helped jurisdictions across the country pass and implement policies that make communication free for incarcerated people and their support networks, including in Massachusetts, Minnesota, Colorado, Connecticut, New York City, San Francisco, San Diego, Miami, and more. And we are currently supporting similar campaigns in over a dozen states and counties. Thus, we know what it takes to implement this policy and are committed to helping Los Angeles County do so.

At this stage, with the implementation date of this policy on the horizon, it is important that decision-makers understand how the rates proposed in this amendment are **astronomically higher than we see on average**. The proposed starting rate of \$0.042/minute totals out to be \$0.63 for a 15-minute phone call. Almost every place that has been successful in implementing free phone calls has gotten significantly better rates than this. In fact, even many places that **don't have free calls for families have better rates** than what is being presented before you today. Examples of lower rates per 15-minute phone call include but are not limited to: Delaware and Mississippi at \$0.60; Illinois at \$0.14; Maryland at \$0.45; all while maintaining the same security and surveillance features.

Furthermore, the extension of the county's service contract with Public Communications Services through 2025 with possible extension to 2026, only benefits those that are profiting from higher contract rates; those making revenue and/or taking commissions. It is surely not in the best interest of the county's financial standing. Nor is it in the best interest of taxpayers, whose hard-earned income will go to funding these poorly negotiated and inflammatory rates.

Overall, to approve this amendment would be fiscally irresponsible. Please remember that the failure of a county to negotiate competitive contracts and fair rates continues the inequity that advocates in Los Angeles County were trying to stop when they demanded that families stop paying for communications. The money your county uses to pay corporations unfair, inflated, and noncompetitive rates comes directly from parents, spouses, grandparents, youth, and the rest of the working people the county aims to serve.

Thank you for your consideration. If you're interested in further data concerning communication rates, I encourage you to look at Worth Rises' database at <https://connectfamiliesnow.com/data>. Please do not hesitate to reach out with questions at thill@worthrises.org.

Sincerely,

Ta'Mara Hill
Director of Policy Campaigns & Government Affairs
Worth Rises