



August 24, 2015

The Honorable Tom Wheeler, Chairman
Federal Communications Commission
445 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20554

Re: Comment for WC Docket 12-375

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

We write to you from the Illinois Campaign for Prison Phone Justice, a project of the Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center. We wish to further comment on the FCC's *Second Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking* (WC Docket No. 12-375; Inmate Calling Services). We wanted to bring your attention a recent article with new information on the Cook County jail and Illinois Department of Corrections we believe reinforces the urgent need for serious reform.

An article in the [Chicago Reporter, published August 19, 2015](#), by Adeshina Emmanuel and Olivia Exstrum, shows how the FCC's regulation of the prison phone industry is already having an impact in Illinois, but could do much more. A few facts were revealed:

- 1) In 2013, \$13.4 million in commissions was paid to the state. This was an increase from \$12.9 million in 2012. Illinois is the highest in the nation for commissions. Despite a reduction in commission percentage from 84% to 76% in 2013, families have not seen significant relief.
- 2) Cook County jail, due to criticism from advocates, has cut phone rates in half since 2012.
- 3) Both elected officials and prison administrators in Illinois agree that we need reform. A spokesperson for Cook County Board President Toni Preckwinkle said, "We believe it is unfair for families to be burdened with excessive costs to communicate with inmates." Cook County chief jail strategist was also quoted as saying, "It's important to stay connected to people you love, who care for you, particularly when you're in custody, particularly when you are facing criminal charges and an uncertain future."

There is a growing consensus for prison phone justice reform. The FCC should aim low. We believe rates could be capped at as low as \$.05 – \$.07 cents per minute, and commissions should be eliminated. The FCC must assure that families with loved ones incarcerated receive real relief.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Brian Dolinar
Illinois Campaign for Prison Phone Justice