

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Corrections and Institutions to which was referred
3 House Bill No. 294 entitled “An act relating to commissary and
4 telecommunications prices in State correctional facilities and fair
5 compensation for incarcerated labor” respectfully reports that it has considered
6 the same and recommends that the bill be amended by striking out all after the
7 enacting clause and inserting in lieu thereof the following:

8 Sec. 1. INTENT

9 It is the intent of the General Assembly to:

10 (1) create conditions of incarceration that encourage the development
11 and maintenance of the personal supports necessary for rehabilitation;

12 (2) mitigate the disruptions to family and community connections
13 caused by incarceration by reducing communication barriers;

14 (3) divest the State from the for-profit prison industry; and

15 (4) inform State correctional policy decision-making with data, fiscal
16 analysis, and agency expertise.

17 Sec. 2. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; EVALUATION OF

18 TELECOMMUNICATIONS SERVICES; REPORT

19 (a) On or before December 1, 2026, the Department of Corrections shall
20 provide to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate

1 Committee on Institutions a written report evaluating options for providing no-
2 cost telecommunications services to inmates in the Department’s custody that:

3 (1) describes the current telecommunications service model, including
4 usage rates, costs, and contract terms under existing provider arrangements;

5 (2) describes alternative options for providing telecommunications
6 services, including through nonprofit providers or as a regulated public utility;

7 (3) analyzes the cost to the State of each alternative, including:

8 (A) start-up and transition costs, both with and without Wi-Fi;

9 (B) ongoing operational and administrative costs;

10 (C) cost comparisons to the current model;

11 (D) impacts on Department budgets;

12 (E) anticipated changes in service usage and volume; and

13 (F) any anticipated benefits or savings, including reasonably
14 ascertainable impacts on behavior, security, safety, and an incarcerated
15 person’s ability to sustain support systems; and

16 (4) identifies implementation, operational, and transition considerations
17 for each alternative, including:

18 (A) administrative, technological, and contractual requirements;

19 (B) operational changes;

20 (C) implementation timeline; and

21 (D) any required statutory, regulatory, or policy updates.

1 (b) In conducting its evaluation of options for providing no-cost
2 telecommunications services, the Department of Corrections shall, when
3 practicable, consult with the following stakeholders:

4 (1) the Public Utility Commission;

5 (2) the Joint Fiscal Office;

6 (3) one or more nonprofit providers of corrections telecommunications
7 services with operational experience;

8 (4) CoreCivic;

9 (5) representatives of families of incarcerated Vermonters or
10 organizations representing families of incarcerated Vermonters;

11 (6) community-based reentry service providers;

12 (7) justice reform organizations;

13 (8) the Prison Research and Innovation Network (PRIN); and

14 (9) any other stakeholders or subject matter experts identified by the
15 Commissioner of Corrections as necessary for the evaluation.

16 (c) The Department of Corrections shall provide to the Joint Legislative
17 Justice Oversight Committee for the Committee's analysis and input:

18 (1) a first draft of the report on or before September 15, 2026; and

19 (2) an updated draft of the report on or before November 15, 2026.

1 Sec. 3. DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS; WAGE IMPACT
2 EVALUATION; REPORT

3 On or before December 1, 2026, the Department of Corrections shall
4 provide to the House Committee on Corrections and Institutions and the Senate
5 Committee on Institutions a written report evaluating the impacts of current
6 wages for inmates in the Department’s custody that:

7 (1) collects and analyzes the current wage levels for inmates;

8 (2) identifies the categories of labor performed by inmates that would
9 otherwise be performed by the State and estimates the cost to the State of
10 providing the same services through State employees or contracted vendors,
11 including wage and benefit costs;

12 (3) compares different wage impact scenarios and estimates the impact
13 of wage adequacy improvements on outcomes for inmates, such as
14 maintenance of family contacts, compliance with restitution and support
15 obligations, reentry success, and participation in facility work programs; and

16 (4) assesses the relationship between current wage levels and the ability
17 of work program participants to purchase telecommunications services and
18 commissary items.

19 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

20 This act shall take effect on passage.

1 and that after passage the title of the bill be amended to read: “An act
2 relating to telecommunications services and wages in correctional facilities”

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8 (Committee vote: _____)

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Representative _____
FOR THE COMMITTEE