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STATE REPRESENTATIVE  
**JAMES WHITE**

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CORRECTIONS - CHAIR  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE &  
INTERGOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

DISTRICT 19  
HARDIN, JASPER  
NEWTON, POLK, TYLER

August 3, 2018

Mr. Bryan Collier, Executive Director  
Texas Department of Criminal Justice  
209 West 14th Street, Suite 500  
Austin, Texas 78701

Director Collier,

Over the last several years, the Texas Department of Criminal Justice has implemented many evidenced-based rehabilitation programs that have placed our incarcerated justice-involved individuals on a path for successful reintegration with free civil society. For example, TDCJ continues to maintain a robust chaplaincy program that provides these incarcerated men and women with a myriad of opportunities to seek spiritual edification and worship. Windham Independent School District delivers cutting-edge and relevant educational services that ultimately prepare our justice-involved men and women with the job skills to provide for their families and contribute to growing their local prosperity.

The Texas Department of Criminal Justice has recognized and responded effectively to sound research that confirms that positive familial relationships are integral to rehabilitation and eventual reintegration into free society. The House Committee on Corrections is on record in applauding TDCJ for the establishment of programs such as Baby and Mother Bonding Initiative or (BAMBI). TDCJ is working with non-profit and faith-based community organizations in conducting the "Day with Dad" program throughout the TDCJ system.

There are many exciting programs taking place in the Texas Department of Criminal Justice that are having a positive and sustained impact on local community safety. Therefore, I am encouraging that TDCJ to continue using all the tools available to include negotiating a more cost efficient contract with our prospective "Texas Offender Telephone" vendor. Based in the information posted, the current vendor charges more for interstate calls than for intrastate calls.<sup>1</sup> In other words, the current vendor charges a teenager, who lives in the Sunnyside neighborhood of Houston or in Fred, Texas and wants to call his TDCJ incarcerated parent, more per minute, than someone calling from New York.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.texasprisonphone.com>



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In many instances, the families that are paying the costs for these calls already are struggling financially. Nevertheless, it is reasonable that the justice-involved and their family and friends should pay a costs that is commensurate with the market because a phone call or text message would have a cost in free society. However, the research overwhelmingly substantiates the powerful impact that positive and strong family connectivity has on rehabilitation and the cost of failure, that is, more crime and higher recidivism rates should matter as well.

I fully understand that the first \$10 million in revenue generated from these calls are directed to crime victims services. This is excellent. Of the revenue levels that exceed the initial \$10 million, half is directed to crime victim services and the other half goes into the general revenue fund. Although legislated decades ago, it is intriguing why the Legislature is benefitting from this scheme and this may receive some legislative attention next session. However, a well-negotiated contract may result in lower costs, which may have the impact of increasing call volume and revenue: Lower call cost, more positive familial connectivity, better rehabilitation, lower recidivism, more local community safety and prosperity.

I am very proud of the dedication and work men and women of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice provide in maintaining safe communities and contributing to the overall prosperity of the Lone Star State.

For God and Texas,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. White".

James White  
State Representative  
House District 19