**Cathryn Johnson-Bachus letter**

**July 9, 2011**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing on behalf of family members of those incarcerated in the Michigan Prison System as well as the incarcerated themselves, who continue to have many questions regarding the MDOC/PCS phone contract and the recent signing of SB 138.

Many family members were under the impression that recent legislature involvement and the signing of SB138 by Governor Snyder would bring financial relief in regards to affordable telephone communication. Though there was no guaranteed victory, there was question as to why the protest last week was still planned as *"we had won something."* **Many were under the impression that the bill being passed by the legislation and signed by Governor Snyder would bring changes to the phone rates and from what many can *interpret,* this does not appear to be the intention.**

As of today, any hope that was instilled in the family members and the prisoners following the signing of SB138 is quickly evaporating and turning into frustration and distrust, as there is still a lack of communication or explanation of the meaning behind the language in the recent changes to SB138. In fact, there is now more confusion and less understanding of the contract between MDOC/PCS, the legislation and SB 138 itself, now family members question whether or not there was ever any intention of providing any sort of financial relief.

Many family members have posed questions to the MDOC and PCS and received no response, vague responses, shocking responses or redirected to legal language that is again, vague, ambiguous or simply incomprehensible to those lacking experience in translating legal terms. What is meant by "not enforceable?" What exactly is "not enforceable?" And if the rates as written in the recent SB138 are ordered and signed by the Governor, why is not enforceable?

With that said, several of us would be very appreciative of a direct response and simple translation of the information provided at

<http://www.capps-mi.org/Synder%20signs%20supplemental.htm> and what the purpose and intention was in passing the amended  SB138 and what hope lies in the signing of the bill by Governor Snyder.

**In addition, some have been told by Senator Kahn's office** "...*that apparently this bill is supposed to take effect for the new fiscal year, which begins October 1st. The "to take immediate effect" part of the bill, applies to the new fiscal year..."*Another individual was informed by a MDOC staff that, *"... the way the bill was written the intent was to repeal the SEF but the way it was passed/signed it didn't include it..."*

**Yet another family member was informed by Cheryl Groves,** *"...the bill has been confusing to a lot of people, but the phone rates will not be lowered" and according to her, Bill 138 does not legally reduce the phone rates, and the rates will remain at .20 cents per minute collect, and .18 cents per minute debit. Cheryl Groves says that the "intent and hope was there to lower the rates, but the bill is not legally interpreted that way and the main purpose of Bill 138 was NOT to lower rates, but to introduce a Pilot Public Safety Program in Flint, MI..."*

Apparently, this conversation between a family member and Cheryl Groves is a complete contradiction to a conversation with the assistants in Senator Kahn's office, who stated "*the rate would be set at $1.38 per call, effective October 1st at the beginning of the fiscal year..."*

Our hopes are, that you as advocacy agencies, can empathize with the mounting frustration we all are feeling since the day the phone changes all occurred unexpectedly. With all due respect, we ask that someone can offer a straight forward explanation of this new development in a way that is comprehensible to the average mind, because what we feel we have received thus far is more of the same empty promises, deception and lack of communication on the behalf of our leaders.

Respectfully,

Cathryn Johnson Bachus

with and for the Citizens of Michigan

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