

Good afternoon, Chair Noor and members of the human services, finance and policy committee.

My name is Alissa Washington, and I'm the founder of the Wrongfully Incarcerated and Over-Sentenced Families Council-MN. I'm also the wife of Cornelius Jackson, who has spent the last 19 years wrongfully incarcerated in a Minnesota prison.

First, I want to sincerely thank you for your continued support in ensuring communication remains free for those in our state's prison system. For families like mine, this is more than a policy—it's a lifeline. Free phone calls have allowed my son to stay connected with his father, but more can be done to keep the strong father and son bond.

Video calls and e-messages offer an additional layer of connection—allowing families to share smiles, life events, and meaningful moments. But in Minnesota, a 15-minute video call costs \$3.50. These fees add up fast, weighing heavily on single mothers and grandmothers. Each time my son wants to see his father, the guilt on his face weighs heavily on me, simply because of the cost.

With Cornelius behind bars, free communication is essential for preserving our family bond without the financial strain. It allows our son to feel his father's love and presence without worrying about what it costs.

This connection is critical to both of their emotional well-being. It helps our son stay grounded at home and in school, and it helps keep Cornelius emotionally strong and safe while he fights for the justice he deserves.

Your continued support makes all the difference in helping families like mine stay together, even under the harshest of circumstances. I humbly ask for your vote in support of HF1861, and thank you for helping us keep these vital connections alive.