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3
4 **AN ENGROSSED RESOLUTION**

5
6 supporting a policy that video and telephone agreements for the Milwaukee County
7 Office of the Sheriff and the House of Correction provide residents of Milwaukee
8 County's correctional facilities with at least 75 minutes of free video calls per week and
9 at least 75 minutes of free voice calls per week

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12 WHEREAS, residents at the Milwaukee County Jail and the House of Correction
13 (HOC) are able to make both voice and video calls throughout their stay to
14 communicate with family, friends, and members of their legal team, which is critical for
15 them to receive familial and financial support, retain legal advice, and communicate
16 about their needs; and

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18 WHEREAS, a 2011 report from the Vera Institute of Justice, "Close to Home:
19 Building on Family Support for People Leaving Jail", found that residents who maintain
20 contact with supportive family members are more likely to succeed after their release
21 and reintegrate back into their communities; and

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23 WHEREAS, the same report found that, of family members surveyed, 39 percent
24 indicated that the cost of phone calls is a significant barrier to communication; and

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26 WHEREAS, a 2006 article in Family Law Quarterly titled "Recidivism and
27 Paternal Engagement" found that increased communication between residents and their
28 children positively impacts recidivism rates and suggests that facilities should
29 encourage developing parent-child relationships while incarcerated; and

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31 WHEREAS, voice and video call usage has increased during the COVID-19
32 pandemic because in-person visits are not possible and in-person visits are positively
33 correlated to an individual's chances of successful reentry into their communities; and

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35 WHEREAS, when in-person visits are possible, there is not a direct bus line to
36 the HOC, requiring passengers to transfer one or more times or find alternative forms of
37 transit and visitation hours end at 6 PM, making it difficult for loved ones to visit after
38 work or school; and

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40 WHEREAS, the HOC is actively working on securing a new contract for phone
41 and video call services, but it has not yet been brought to the County Board for
42 approval; and

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44 WHEREAS, under the current contract, the HOC charges \$0.21 per minute for a
45 voice call and residents receive two free phone calls per week, which they can place at
46 any time; and

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48 WHEREAS, the HOC charges \$0.40 per minute for a video call, ~~which is~~
49 ~~charged in minimum 30-minute blocks of time~~; and

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51 WHEREAS, in May 2021, 80,899 phone calls were made at the HOC, totaling
52 696,511 minutes; and

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54 WHEREAS, the Office of the Sheriff, in the 2021 Adopted Budget, contracted
55 with CenturyLink, Inc. for Inmate Phone Commissions and Video Visitation
56 Commissions in the amounts of \$1,350,000 and \$50,000, respectively, although based
57 on changing population amounts and the COVID-19 pandemic it is not guaranteed that
58 they'll receive these budgeted for amounts; and

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60 WHEREAS, the Office of the Sheriff charges \$0.21 per minute for a voice call
61 and residents receive two free phone calls which they can place at any time during their
62 stay; there is also a free phone line that residents may use to place phone calls to the
63 Public Defender's Office at any time during booking or in their assigned housing units;
64 and

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66 WHEREAS, the Office of the Sheriff charges \$0.40 per minute for a video call,
67 ~~which is charged in minimum 30-minute blocks of time~~; and

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69 WHEREAS, in August 2020, the Federal Communications Commission (FCC)
70 released a proposal that would reduce its interstate rate caps in federal facilities, which
71 are currently \$0.21 per minute for debit and prepaid calls and \$0.25 per minute for
72 collect calls, to \$0.14 per minute for debit, prepaid, and collect calls from prisons and
73 \$0.16 per minute for debit, prepaid, and collect calls from jails; and

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75 **WHEREAS, the 2022 Recommended Budget reduces telephone revenue by**
76 **approximately \$700,000 with the aim of reducing the cost of phone calls placed**
77 **by occupants in the House of Correction and the Milwaukee County Jail by 25**
78 **percent; and**

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80 WHEREAS, the prison phone call industry brings in nearly \$1.4 billion according
81 to the 2012 Bloomberg article, "Prison Phones Prove Captive Market for Private Equity",
82 which is a burden that largely falls on families that are already struggling to support their
83 loved ones financially and emotionally; and

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85 WHEREAS, a June 2021 Business Insider article found that women of color are
86 more likely to interact with the criminal justice system: 44 percent of Black women have
87 an incarcerated family member, which means they bear the financial and emotional
88 brunt of supporting their family member through their experience; and
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90 WHEREAS, the same article found that one-third of prison or jail residents are
91 Black, indicating that the primary spenders of jail phone or videos calls are Black men
92 and women, which deepens the racial wealth gap in America; and
93

94 WHEREAS, a 2015 study by the Prison Policy Initiative, "Screening Out Family
95 Time: the for-profit video visitation industry in prisons and jails," cited a "rigorous study
96 by the Minnesota Department of Corrections [which] found that even a single visit
97 reduced recidivism by 13% for new crimes and 25% for technical violations"; and
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99 WHEREAS, the HOC has made many positive strides to prioritize reentry for
100 residents by focusing on workforce development, educational programs, inside and
101 outside resident work crews, mental health services, the fatherhood initiative, special
102 programs for women, and other services to reduce recidivism and set residents up for
103 success when they return to the community; and
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105 WHEREAS, the more connections residents can make to the outside and to their
106 families, the less likely they are to reoffend; and
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108 WHEREAS, providing free video or voice calls to residents provides an
109 opportunity for connection to community, family, friends, and lawyers; and
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111 WHEREAS, because connection to one's community is positively correlated to
112 reduced rates of recidivism and successful reentry, the Milwaukee County Jail and
113 House of Correction should facilitate the ability for residents to communicate with
114 individuals in their community; and
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116 WHEREAS, the Office of the Sheriff and HOC should prioritize reducing
117 recidivism, preparing residents for successful reentry into the community, and
118 rehabilitation over punishment; and
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120 WHEREAS, the Committee on Judiciary, Safety, and General Services (JSGS),
121 at its meeting of September 9, 2021, laid over File No. 21-763 for one meeting
122 (vote 4-1); and
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124 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its Special Virtual Meeting of
125 October 12, 2021, postponed File No. 21-763 to a date certain (October 21, 2021)
126 (vote 5-0); and
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128 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its meeting of October 21, 2021,
129 postponed File No. 21-763 to a date certain (October 29, 2021) (vote 5-0); and
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131 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its Special Virtual Meeting of
132 October 29, 2021, laid over File No. 21-763 to January 2022 (vote 5-0); and
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134 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its meeting of January 20, 2022,
135 recommended adoption of File No. 21-763 as amended (vote 3-2); now, therefore,
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137 ~~BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby~~
138 ~~supports a policy that video and telephone agreements for the Milwaukee County~~
139 ~~Office of the Sheriff and the House of Correction provide residents with at least~~
140 ~~90 75 minutes of free video and voice calls per day week and as many minutes of~~
141 ~~video and voice calls as infrastructure allows, 75 minutes of free voice calls per~~
142 ~~week and discontinues the practice of charging people in our care for video and~~
143 ~~voice calls; and~~
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145 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors (County
146 Board) hereby supports a policy goal to effectuate the following:
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- 148 • A commitment to lowering each year the cost of video and voice calls to
149 residents in the Criminal Justice Facility and the House of Correction
150 (HOC) to free or no more than is needed to cover reasonable costs to
151 provide and maintain the communication equipment
- 152 • A goal to be a national leader in the amount of free or ultra-low-cost
153 minutes of video and voice calls provided to each person in our care
154 subject reasonable constraints due to building infrastructure, staffing, and
155 security needs

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157 ; and
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159 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, Milwaukee County (the County) shall take the
160 following steps to effectuate the policy goal outlined above:
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- 162 • The Procurement Division, Department of Administrative Services
163 (DAS), working in conjunction with the Office of the Sheriff, the HOC,
164 and the Information Management Services Division (IMSD), DAS, and
165 other staff as needed, is requested to issue a Request for
166 Information to gather information on how best to structure a future
167 Request for Proposals to help provide the technological
168 infrastructure to efficiently provide free or ultra-low-cost video and
169 voice calls
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- The Office of Strategy, Budget, and Performance, working in conjunction with the Office of the Sheriff and HOC, is requested to develop a performance measurement in the annual budget to provide a transparent accounting of how well the County is doing to achieve its policy goal through:
 - Reducing anticipated video and voice calling revenue from residents and lowering per minute access charges
 - Implementing new technology or vendor agreements designed to increase resident access to video and voice calling and to lower costs charged to residents

; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Office of the Sheriff and HOC, working in conjunction with the DAS and other staff as needed, is requested to provide a report to the County Board no later than the July 2022 meeting cycle on the initial steps taken to achieve the policy goal outlined in this resolution.

~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Office of the Sheriff (MCSO) and the Milwaukee County House of Correction, shall work with the Procurement Division, Department of Administrative Services, to issue a new Request for Proposals for video and voice calls placed by occupants of the Milwaukee County House of Correction and Milwaukee County Jail to most efficiently provide this basic human need; and~~

~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, costs or allotments of voice calls shall be rounded up only to the nearest minute, and of video calls rounded to no more than 15 minute blocks of time; and~~

~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, a week can begin and end on whichever day the vendor chooses but shall be consistent from week to week; and~~

~~BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Office of the Sheriff and the House of Correction shall provide an informational report to the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisor's for the January 2022 committee cycle detailing progress on securing the requested contract arrangements.~~

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