



AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION

Wisconsin

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Chair Bielinski, Vice-Chair Capriolo, and Honorable Members of the Milwaukee County Board Committee on Judiciary, Law Enforcement and General Services:

The American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin appreciates the opportunity to provide comments in opposition to File #25-731- Amendment #3 to the Incarcerated People's Communication Services (IPCS) Agreement with Inmate Calling Solutions, LLC d/b/a ICsolutions (ICS) to include offsite mail scanning services.

This resolution notes that a contract was entered into with ICsolutions in March 2022 to provide communications and tablet services to people incarcerated at the Milwaukee County Jail and Community Reintegration Center, and the agreement includes an option for Milwaukee County to "activate mail scanning services" through a future amendment. The CRC is seeking an amendment to the IPCS agreement to provide "offsite digital mail scanning, legal mail verification, encryption, and digital document delivery services" for people in CRC's care effective January 1, 2026 that would run through March 28, 2028.

While documents attached to this file provide little insight into the full details and scope of this contract amendment, if this proposal mirrors recent contracts prisons and jails have recently entered with for-profit companies to scan and deliver mail to incarcerated residents,¹ the ACLU of Wisconsin strongly urges this committee to oppose signing off on this item.

Despite broad claims about preventing contraband and increasing safety, the data often does not support these claims. Private companies that dominate the prison technology industry stand to benefit immensely by bundling communications services together (calls, tablets, mail scanning). Instead of their actual mail, incarcerated people receive a paper printout of scanned copies of their mail or are forced to view scans on tablets and kiosks. The Dane County Jail pitched a mail scanning contract over the summer that received overwhelming pushback from the community.² In September, the Dane County Board ultimately voted to reject a proposed three-year contract by a vote of 31-5.³

¹ "Mail scanning: A harsh and exploitative new trend in prisons," Prison Policy Initiative (Nov. 2022), <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2022/11/17/mail-scanning/>.

² See Push to ban physical mail at the Dane County Jail draws fire," Cap Times (June 27, 2025), https://captimes.com/news/government/push-to-ban-physical-mail-at-the-dane-county-jail-draws-fire/article_b80da8b8-4be5-4a08-8b86-f2e608555479.html;

"The Dane County Jail scrambles to back up its case for eliminating paper mail," Tone Madison (July 14, 2025), <https://tonemadison.com/articles/dane-county-jail-scrambles-to-back-up-its-case-for-eliminating-paper-mail/>;

"Propaganda hoedown: How the Dane County Sheriff tried to sell the Smart Communications contract," Tone Madison (Sept. 15, 2025), <https://tonemadison.com/articles/propaganda-hoedown-how-the-dane-county-sheriff-tried-to-sell-the-smart-communications-contract/>;

³ "County Board rebukes sheriff's proposed jail communications contract," Cap Times (Sept. 19, 2025), https://captimes.com/news/government/county-board-rebukes-sheriff-s-proposed-jail-communications-contract/article_eb50fda4-edf7-48c2-8691-9debd1b6edca.html.

In addition to constitutional concerns about incarcerated people's access to legal mail under these mail scanning and delivery schemes, the human impact is profound. One year ago today, ACLU-WI's Coalition and Relations Advocate Melissa Ludin published an article describing the importance of receiving physical mail from loved ones while incarcerated.⁴ She wrote, in part:

In Wisconsin prisons, a new policy trend is replacing physical mail with photocopies. For those who haven't experienced incarceration, this change might seem minor – an administrative adjustment to improve security. But as someone who has lived through incarceration and experienced the profound impact of receiving physical mail, I can tell you that this shift robs incarcerated people of one of the few deeply human connections they have left.

During my time in prison, receiving physical letters from loved ones and friends was a lifeline. Holding a letter in my hands and knowing that it had been written, touched, and sent with care by someone who believed in me gave me a sense of connection that nothing else in that environment could provide.

Replacing this connection with sterile photocopies threatens to erase an essential aspect of what keeps people hopeful, motivated, and connected to the outside world.

During my time in prison, letters were my lifeline. The simple act of opening an envelope and feeling the paper within was deeply grounding. I could hold onto those letters, reread them when I felt lost, and remind myself that someone out there cared about me. The weight of the paper and the handwriting on the page carried the presence of the person who had sent it.

Physical mail was more than words on paper – it was a reminder that I hadn't been forgotten. Those letters gave me something to hold onto, literally and emotionally. They helped me stay hopeful in an environment designed to strip away my sense of self and, for me, being a woman.

When I imagine those same letters replaced by photocopies, I feel a deep sadness for those who are incarcerated now. The thought of receiving a copy instead of the real thing – of being handed a bland replica of what used to feel so personal – is heartbreaking.

Last December, the ACLU of Wisconsin sent out an annual holiday card that highlighted the dehumanizing nature of this mail scanning practice. Folks on our mailing list did not receive a physical card but instead opened up an envelope to find a piece of copied paper, printed on each side with black-and-white scans of the card (see image on following page).

Prior to making a sweeping change that locks in a multi-year contract for the CRC and presumably sets the stage for mail scanning at the Milwaukee County Jail, we urge this committee to *at least* provide additional opportunity for the public to weigh in on this proposal.

⁴ "The Importance of Physical Mail for Incarcerated People in Wisconsin," ACLU-WI Blog (Dec. 9, 2024), <https://www.aclu-wi.org/news/importance-physical-mail-incarcerated-people-wisconsin/>.

