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3
4 **AN AMENDED 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

59
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

65
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

68
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

74
75 **WHEREAS, the 2022 Recommended Budget reduces telephone revenue by**
76 **approximated \$700,000 with the aim of reducing the cost of phone calls placed by**
77 **occupants in the House of Correction and the Milwaukee County Jail by 25**
78 **percent; and**

79
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

84

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

89
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 WHEREAS, a 2015 study by the Prison Policy Initiative, "Screening Out Family
94 Time: the for-profit video visitation industry in prisons and jails," cited a "rigorous study
95 by the Minnesota Department of Corrections [which] found that even a single visit
96 reduced recidivism by 13% for new crimes and 25% for technical violations"; and

97
98 WHEREAS, the HOC has made many positive strides to prioritize reentry for
99 residents by focusing on workforce development, educational programs, inside and
100 outside resident work crews, mental health services, the fatherhood initiative, special
101 programs for women, and other services to reduce recidivism and set residents up for
102 success when they return to the community; and

103
104 WHEREAS, the more connections residents can make to the outside and to their
105 families, the less likely they are to reoffend; and

106
107 WHEREAS, providing free video or voice calls to residents provides an
108 opportunity for connection to community, family, friends, and lawyers; and

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110 WHEREAS, because connection to one's community is positively correlated to
111 reduced rates of recidivism and successful reentry, the Milwaukee County Jail and
112 House of Correction should facilitate the ability for residents to communicate with
113 individuals in their community; and

114
115 WHEREAS, the Office of the Sheriff and HOC should prioritize reducing
116 recidivism, preparing residents for successful reentry into the community, and
117 rehabilitation over punishment; and

118
119 WHEREAS, the Committee on Judiciary, Safety, and General Services (JSGS),
120 at its meeting of September 9, 2021, laid over File No. 21-763 for one meeting
121 (vote 4-1); and

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123 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its Special Virtual Meeting of
124 October 12, 2021, postponed File No. 21-763 to a date certain (October 21, 2021)
125 (vote 5-0); and

126

127 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its meeting of October 21, 2021,
128 postponed File No. 21-763 to a date certain (October 29, 2021) (vote 5-0); and

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130 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its Special Virtual Meeting of
131 October 29, 2021, laid over File No. 21-763 to January 2022 (vote 5-0); and

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133 WHEREAS, the Committee on JSGS, at its meeting of January 20, 2022,
134 recommended adoption of File No. 21-763 as amended (vote 3-2); now, therefore,

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136 BE IT RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors hereby supports
137 a policy that video and telephone agreements for the Milwaukee County Office of the
138 Sheriff and the House of Correction provide residents with at least **90 75** minutes of free
139 video **and voice** calls per **day week** and **as many minutes of video and voice calls**
140 **as infrastructure allows, 75 minutes of free voice calls per week** and **discontinues**
141 **the practice of charging people in our care for video and voice calls;** and

142
143 **BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the Milwaukee County Office of the Sheriff**
144 **and the Milwaukee County House of Correction, shall work with the Procurement**
145 **Division, Department of Administrative Services, to issue a new Request for**
146 **Proposals for video and voice calls placed by occupants of the Milwaukee County**
147 **House of Correction and Milwaukee County Jail to most efficiently provide this**
148 **basic human need; and**

149
150 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, costs or allotments of voice calls shall be rounded
151 up only to the nearest minute, and of video calls rounded to no more than 15 minute
152 blocks of time; and

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

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

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163 01/20/22
164 s:\committees\2022\january\jsgs\resolutions\21-763 resolution free voice and video calls in jail and hoc as
165 amended.docx