

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2020

The Honorable William P. Barr
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Director Michael Carvajal
Federal Bureau of Prisons
U.S. Department of Justice
320 First Street NW
Washington, DC 20534

Dear Attorney General Barr and Director Carvajal:

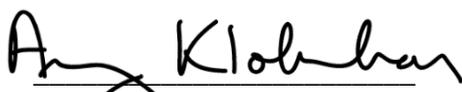
We write to follow up on our March 20 letter urging the Bureau of Prisons (BOP) to waive fees associated with phone calls for incarcerated people and to allow for unsupervised communications with attorneys for the duration of the federal emergency due to the coronavirus (COVID-19). In light of the new authority provided to the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the continued threat posed by COVID-19, we urge you to take immediate action to implement these policies.

The Senate-passed Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, which was signed into law on March 27, 2020, includes new authority for BOP to promulgate rules that would allow inmates to connect with loved ones through video teleconferencing and by telephone free of charge if the Attorney General “finds that emergency conditions will materially affect the functioning of the [BOP].” This legislation was enacted following BOP’s implementation of several measures intended to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 at federal prisons, including suspending visits for both social and legal purposes. Incarcerated people, visitors, and those who work as federal correctional staff, as well as their families, are at especially high risk of infection due to the conditions of close confinement. According to the BOP, at least 138 federal inmates and 59 staff members have tested positive for COVID-19.

It is for this reason that we urge DOJ and BOP to take immediate action to issue a rule to allow for video teleconferencing and telephone use that is free of charge to incarcerated people and their families. The new rule should also make clear that incarcerated people can make telephone calls, use video conferencing services, and send emails to communicate with an attorney in a private and confidential setting without incurring charges.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



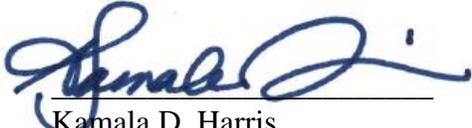
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
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Kamala D. Harris
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Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
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Christopher A. Coons
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Richard Blumenthal
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Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator