

**MINUTES OF THE  
SENATE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY**

**Eighty-third Session  
March 13, 2025**

The Senate Committee on Judiciary was called to order by Chair Melanie Scheible at 1:10 p.m. on Thursday, March 13, 2025, in Room 1214 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 6 of the Nevada Legislature Hearing Rooms, 7120 Amigo Street, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the attendance roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Senator Melanie Scheible, Chair  
Senator Edgar Flores, Vice Chair  
Senator James Ohrenschall  
Senator Roberta Lange  
Senator Rochelle T. Nguyen  
Senator Ira Hansen  
Senator Lisa Krasner  
Senator John Ellison

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Jered McDonald, Committee Policy Analyst  
Michael Scully, Committee Counsel  
Timothy Gibbs, Committee Secretary

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Russ Alfano, Medical Administrator, Nevada Department of Corrections  
Max Grinstein  
Kimberly Renee  
Jagada Chambers  
Nick Shepack, Nevada State Director, Fines and Fees Justice Center  
Denise Heredia, Associate Director, Return Strong!  
Tia Smith, American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada  
Harrison Epstein, Legal Extern, Clark County Public Defender's Office  
Angela Knott, Washoe County Deputy Public Defender

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Tonja Brown, Advocates for the Inmates and the Innocent  
Yesenia Moya  
Yvonne Efverlund  
Brittany Kemp

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

We have a bill draft request (BDR) to introduce this afternoon, and it is BDR 43-900.

**BILL DRAFT REQUEST 43-900**: Makes various changes relating to traffic offenses. (Later introduced as Senate Bill 359.)

This BDR relates to traffic offenses, and it hopefully will improve the process for contesting civil citations and for handling both civil and criminal citations in our courts here in the State. Not hearing any questions, I would accept a motion to introduce BDR 43-900.

SENATOR FLORES MOVED TO INTRODUCE BDR 43-900.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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Now, we will start our work session with Senate Bill (S.B.) 4. I will turn it over to Mr. McDonald to walk through the work session document ([Exhibit C](#)).

**SENATE BILL 4**: Revises provisions relating to consent to adoption. (BDR 11-294)

JERED McDONALD (Committee Policy Analyst):

This bill revises provisions related to consent to adoption. It was sponsored by this committee on behalf of the Division of Child and Family Services and heard on February 12. The bill adds caseworkers who are employed by an authorized agency to the list of witnesses who may attest to the consent to a specific child adoption. There are no amendments proposed for this bill.

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CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

I will accept a motion to do pass S.B. 4.

SENATOR NGUYEN MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 4.

SENATOR LANGE SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR SCHEIBLE: That brings us to S.B. 13. I will once again hand it over to Mr. McDonald.

**SENATE BILL 13**: Revises provisions relating to exoneration of bail. (BDR 14-471)

MR. McDONALD:

Senate Bill 13 revises provisions related to exoneration of bail. This bill was sponsored by this committee on behalf of the Nevada Supreme Court and heard on February 25. The bill requires the court to exonerate bail if the defendant admitted to bail and the prosecuting attorney stipulated to the exoneration of bail. As was discussed in the hearing, there was an amendment proposed by John McCormick, included in the work session document ([Exhibit D](#)), to allow for an alternative disposition of bail if both parties of the defense and prosecution agree.

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

I will accept a motion to amend and do pass [as amended] S.B. 13.

SENATOR NGUYEN MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED S.B. 13.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

That brings us to S.B. 88.

**SENATE BILL 88**: Revises provisions relating to offenders. (BDR 16-491)

MR. McDONALD:

This bill revises provisions related to offenders. This was sponsored on behalf of the Joint Interim Standing Committee on Judiciary and heard on February 26. The bill requires the director of the Department of Corrections (DOC) to discharge any outstanding medical debt owed by an offender to the department upon the release of the offender from prison. We do have one amendment in the work session document ([Exhibit E](#)) proposed by the chair. It will amend the bill to make the requirement proposed in subsection 4, paragraph (l) of section 1 to discharge any outstanding medical debt owed by the offender to the Department retroactive to all previously released offenders.

SENATOR HANSEN:

Does this absolve private providers who are outside of the prison system from being charged for that? Does it absolve them from being able to collect the debt still? This is strictly for inside the prison, right?

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

This would generally apply to instances in which the person who's incarcerated is taken outside of the prison to receive medical care that they can't provide in the prison. Presently, the State is paying that cost to the medical provider and then trying to recoup the cost from the person who was incarcerated. This would maintain the first two steps. They would still have to pay, and they would still be taking people outside of the prison for medical care. The State would still be paying the provider for the care. We would just not do that third step where the State tries to get reimbursed by the person who was incarcerated. Does that answer the question?

SENATOR HANSEN:

Yes, I want to make sure that I know what this is and is not doing, so, yes, that is the answer I was looking for. I know we are not a fiscal committee, but I talked to the prison folks. They said this involves millions of dollars in potential cost to the State. What is the fiscal note on this bill?

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

Thank you for that question because I am a little surprised by that. I thought we heard in our presentation that even though there are millions of dollars owed, we have collected something in the range of \$6,000 per year. I would expect that the cost would be closer to \$6,000 a year because that would be the revenue we are missing out on.

SENATOR HANSEN:

That's why I just want to double check because that did not totally jive with what I had heard as well. I want to make sure that we are not passing substantial debt onto either the prison system itself or ultimately the taxpayers if this bill passes.

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

I think we do have somebody in the room who can answer that question.

RUSS ALFANO (Medical Administrator, Nevada Department of Corrections):

Yes, it is about \$6,000 that we actually collect. This is what was addressed in the amendment—to make that go away. For your first question, you are correct. The DOC does pay in full for treatments and services to our community providers when an offender goes to them for treatment. This bill absolves them when they are released or paroled from us saying, “You owe us back for that.”

SENATOR HANSEN:

In a normal year, it is only \$6,000 that you would collect? Normally you only collect \$6,000 anyway, out of millions and millions of dollars paid to get people better in the prison system?

MR. ALFANO:

That is correct. That's about all we have earned. I believe that was the three-or-five-year average—about \$6,600.

SENATOR HANSEN:

Much less than I anticipated.

SENATOR KRASNER:

When an inmate needs to go to an outside healthcare provider—let's say there's a prison fight and they are harmed, damaged or they break their fist punching

someone—how do we ensure that those outpatient or out-prison, healthcare providers get payment for the services that they rendered?

MR. ALFANO:

That is a different circumstance that is covered under *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 209.246 [subsection 1, paragraph (a)], when you are dealing with altercations, fights, self-harm or even sports-related injuries. The DOC contracts with preferred provider networks to access their network of community providers. Anything that is a treatment beyond the scope of the general practitioners that we employ, we go out through them and then through a third-party administrator. They submit billing and then we pay on a weekly—we call it a check run—where they submit all the claims from the previous week, and they are adjudicated and adjusted based on the network rates that were agreed upon through the PPL [Public Partnerships LLC] network. Then we pay those rates through the third-party administrator, checks are issued and such. It is contracted.

SENATOR KRASNER:

So, the bill specifically deals with medical debt of inmates. Where did they get that debt? Where does that medical debt come from? If you are saying all the outside providers are paid for and all the end care health care is provided, then why is there any medical debt at all? What are we talking about here? Where does that come from?

MR. ALFANO:

Under provisions of NRS 209.246 [subsection 1, paragraph (a)], if an offender has costs incurred as a result of self-harm, harming another or sports-related injury, the prison medical pays the bill on behalf of the offender's treatment, and then that bill is submitted to the Inmate Welfare Account to make the prison medical whole. The Inmate Welfare Account would then ascribe that debt to the particular offenders if they were found guilty, for lack of a better term, under their disciplinary report. For example, cellmate A punches cellmate B, cellmate A is the attacker, so he is responsible for cellmate B's repairing of his broken jaw or something.

That is where the debt comes from. What this bill is referencing is when that offender that has accrued this debt is paroled or gets their sentence commuted, we tell them that, "By the way, you owe X amount of dollars." Inmate welfare will notify them 30 days after release. They will then follow up with a 60-day

notification. The success we have had in being reimbursed for anything is amassing about \$6,600 a year. The cost for us to do the processing, tracking, mailing, stationery and keeping and following up on these costs us about \$4,000 to \$4,500 per year to net an income of \$6,600 a year.

We are fine with this bill as amended; let's just not do this piece. As Senator Scheible said, we will do step one. We will take care of them, make sure they're treated, and if it is beyond our scope of work and practice, we will send them to an outside specialist. The DOC pays on their behalf, and we just will not chase them down the road. They have other things to worry about upon release and reintegration back into society than trying to pay us \$300 a month.

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

I am ready to accept a motion to amend and do pass [as amended] on S.B. 88.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL MOVED TO AMEND AND DO PASS AS AMENDED S.B. 88.

SENATOR NGUYEN SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED. (SENATORS ELLISON, HANSEN AND KRASNER VOTED NO.)

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SENATOR HANSEN:

I reserve the right to change my vote.

SENATOR ELLISON:

I reserve the right to change my vote.

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

Seeing no further questions, that brings us to S.B. 140 and its work session document ([Exhibit F](#)).

**SENATE BILL 140**: Revises provisions governing certain programs of treatment established by the juvenile court. (BDR 5-62)

MR. McDONALD:

This bill revises provisions governing certain programs of treatment established by the juvenile court. This was sponsored by Senator Ohrenschall and heard on February 18. The bill expands the authority of juvenile courts to establish a program for the treatment of children diagnosed or suspected of having neurobehavioral disorders associated with prenatal exposure to alcohol or a controlled substance. We have no amendments on this bill.

SENATOR ELLISON:

My colleague did a great job introducing this bill, and I talked to him prior to this. One of the cases that I had a problem with was rape during the trial. The judge will determine if that will go up to district court. Is that correct? And only the judge can make that decision if the child is still tried as a juvenile or goes up.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:

Senate Bill 140 if passed would still leave the discretion as to whether this kind of therapeutic diversion court would be established. Currently, we have a therapeutic diversion court in Las Vegas called DAAY Court—Detention Alternative for Autistic Youth. You heard from Judge [Soonhee (Sunny)] Bailey who runs the DAAY Court down in Southern Nevada that tries to identify children right now who might be on the autism spectrum—who've oftentimes never gotten any treatment—and tries to divert them and get them that treatment. This would expand it to other neurobehavioral disorders such as kids who've been exposed to alcohol or other drugs before they were born. I urge your support. I think that they've had a tremendous success rate with this program, and I hope the committee would support.

CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

I will take a motion to do pass S.B. 140.

SENATOR NGUYEN MOVED TO DO PASS S.B. 140.

SENATOR FLORES SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

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CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

That brings us to the conclusion of our work session. Now I will open the hearing on S.B. 323. I will be presenting, so Vice Chair Flores will take over the gavel.

**SENATE BILL 323**: Revises provisions relating to offenders. (BDR 16-709)

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

We will open up the hearing on Senate Bill 323.

SENATOR MELANIE SCHEIBLE (Senatorial District No. 9):

I am here to help present S.B. 323, and I am just thrilled to be joined by Max Grinstein. He was a member of the Nevada Youth Legislature in the Eighty-second Session, and he presented this committee with an amazing bill to continue to foster relationships between people who are in custody and their families—particularly mothers and their children. And Mr. Grinstein, since completing his term at the Youth Legislature, has also graduated from high school, and he is now a student at Yale University. I did not think he could get any smarter or any more polished, but he has; he remains incredibly committed to the people of Nevada. He remains incredibly bright and sharp, and working with him on S.B. 323 has been an absolute joy. Senate Bill 323 builds on the work that we did last session to foster those relationships between people in custody and their families in order to continue that into the future. I am very happy to turn over the presentation to Mr. Grinstein.

MAX GRINSTEIN:

I am a former Nevada Youth Legislator representing Senate District 15 and a recent graduate of the Davidson Academy in Reno. Two years ago, I sat before the Senate Judiciary Committee and presented S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session. Senator Scheible and I drafted S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session to create a pilot program to provide free daily 15-minute phone calls to prisoners at Florence McClure Correctional Center—Nevada's women's prison—so that they could stay in touch with their families. While S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session passed unanimously and was signed into law by Governor Joe Lombardo, the pilot program that it created has since run its course. Because of this, I am back this session with a simple ask for the Legislature: to extend a program that has kept hundreds of Nevada families together over the past two years.

I could sit here and rattle off statistics about the thousands of free phone calls that have been placed through the Florence McClure pilot program, but more persuasive than that are the voices of those who have been helped by S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session. In fact, we have received a number of letters from women who've been able to foster renewed relationships with their children because of the program. I want to share excerpts from the two letters that have been the most meaningful to me. One woman at Florence McClure wrote that when she first called her three-year-old daughter after the pilot program was enacted, she asked her daughter if she knew who she was talking to. Her daughter's response was a no. Her daughter lit up when learning that she was speaking to her incarcerated mother, exclaiming over the phone, "Wait, you are my mom?" Because of the free phone calls provided by the pilot program, this woman writes that she has been able to have "consistent daily communication with my three-year-old daughter so that she can get to know her mommy even though I am unable to be there." I have submitted the woman's voluntary questionnaire ([Exhibit G](#)) for the committee's review.

Another woman incarcerated in Florence McClure wrote to us in the summer of 2023 shortly after Governor Lombardo signed S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session into law: "I feel lost and alone without my family." She wrote, "My small tribe is the pulse in my heart, but it is a faint pulse since I can't even contact them. My family, who are financially crippled, can't afford phone time." She continued, "However, in the past three days, I have been able to talk to them every day." Her letter ended with one final ask, "Please turn this pilot program into a permanent practice, please. Thank you, and God bless." Echoing that woman's words, I along with Senator Scheible and the rest of the S.B. 323 sponsors and cosponsors would like to ask the committee to not let a program that has benefited so many Nevada families die.

Senate Bill No. 234 of the 82nd Session originally created a pilot program to test whether a program like this would be beneficial for prisons and for Nevada's incarcerated population. Along with creating the pilot program, the bill instructed the DOC to issue a report evaluating its successes. The Department did so in February 2024, and the conclusions of the report were, to say the least, heartening. According to the DOC, 93,394 free calls were placed in total at Florence McClure between July 2023 and January 2024. The total number of calls, both free and billable, during the pilot period increased communication with family members and friends by 23 percent. Perhaps most importantly, the report found that the population in general felt happier, less stressed and had a

greater sense of well-being. "Having daily interaction with loved ones," the report prepared by the Nevada DOC goes on to state, "improved daily functioning, quality of life and stability for everyone at Florence McClure."

With that background in mind, S.B. 323 aims to do two main things. First, given the success of the two-year pilot program established pursuant to S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session, S.B. 323 makes it permanent. Incarcerated women at Florence McClure Correctional Center will continue to receive free daily 15-minute phone calls, allowing them to continue to keep in touch with their children who themselves have done nothing wrong. Second, it codifies recent Federal Communications Commission rules that eliminate an undue tax burden on Nevada families by prohibiting the DOC from making revenue on prison phone calls. This ensures that children with loved ones at Florence McClure and other Nevada prisons can affordably maintain relationships with their parents even outside the scope of a short, free, 15-minute call.

Finally, with that overview in mind, let me conclude by answering the most fundamental question, why should you support S.B. 323? I will provide the same answer that I gave two years ago when advocating for S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session—that it is about families. I think it is fitting that this bill was scheduled for a hearing during children's week at the Legislature because at the end of the day, this bill is about kids. It is about strengthening family bonds and showing that even if a family is separated by prison walls, the strongest bond in the world is still between parents and their children.

That woman's daughter might not at first recognize her incarcerated mother's voice, but her face did light up when she realized that her mother was on the other side of the line. That feeling of love stays with her even though her mother can't be with her 24/7. The success of S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session demonstrates the enormous amount of good that can come from fostering and promoting bonds between parents and their children. Senate Bill 323 ensures that incarcerated Nevada mothers can continue to have an affordable and accessible tool to do so.

SENATOR NGUYEN:

Do you have any information—and maybe this would be best answered by the DOC—on how programs that allow this communication between family members and those that are incarcerated have actually helped with the general

attitude and behavior of the people that are incarcerated and how that might lead to safer work environments for correction officers within the facility?

MR. GRINSTEIN:

I do not have firm statistics. I think that would be best suited for the DOC. But what the report ([Exhibit H](#)) that I have submitted for the committee's review does say is that there was a tangible impact on mental health, behavior and daily functioning, which I assume does segue into the different areas that you are referencing.

SENATOR NGUYEN:

Do you have any data regarding places around the country that have implemented programs like this on the cost savings that there are for mental health services and behavioral issues within correctional facilities when you increase the amount of time that people can communicate with loved ones?

MR. GRINSTEIN:

This is a really important point when considering this bill. I think that while there is a tangible immediate cost to the prison system in providing free calls, really what we are doing here is providing cost savings in the future. Daily consistent communication with parents is one of the most salient factors in determining if a justice-impacted child will end up in the prison system one day. There's also research that suggests that communication with children impacts how likely it is that an offender themselves will reoffend after they've been released from prison. I have submitted a handout ([Exhibit I](#)) for the committee's review containing a number of surveys and studies that prove that point.

SENATOR KRASNER:

In your presentation, you said that [S.B. 323](#) contained Florence McClure and other prisons. Is there an amendment coming that includes other prisons?

MR. GRINSTEIN:

No, there's not another amendment coming. The first portion of the bill extends the pilot program that was established by S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session. That only applies to Florence McClure Correctional Center for two main reasons. First of all, originally two years ago when we were going to communicate with the DOC, they let us know that the phone call infrastructure at other prisons did not exist to allow for an increased volume of calls that would be brought about by a free phone call pilot program. For that reason, we have kept it to Florence

McClure Correctional Center. We're also keeping it there for a cost reason because we think it makes sense to reduce the scope of the fiscal impact the bill would have by reducing it from now to one prison.

For the second part of your question, I have referenced other prisons because the bill does two things. It also codifies Federal Communications Commission rules that require the DOC to not extract revenue by charging an increased price for prison phone calls. As a result, that applies to the entire offender population regardless of if they are in Florence McClure or not.

SENATOR KRASNER:

You keep mentioning that it is just between the women in Florence McClure and their children, but in the bill, it says any family member. So, it is not just children, right? It could be a husband, an uncle, a dad, a grandpa, boyfriend or girlfriend.

MR. GRINSTEIN:

That is right. I will leave the practical implementation questions for the Department to answer. But we have found that this bill has been most beneficial because it has helped to foster those relationships between incarcerated mothers at Florence McClure and their children. The DOC in its reports also references an instance where a woman was able to get in touch with her elderly husband. He's in his seventies, and I believe he had Alzheimer's. In that case, I think it is beneficial to foster other relationships between family members and their incarcerated loved ones in prison.

SENATOR KRASNER:

So, just to clarify, it is not just their children, it is all family members?

MR. GRINSTEIN:

That is correct. What we are doing is providing a 15-minute phone call that they can do with as they please.

SENATOR OHRENSCHALL:

Do you know how many female inmates participated in the pilot program—in terms of trying to stay in touch with their family? I talked to many constituents who do not have reliable transportation. Even getting to Florence McClure near Nellis Air Force Base is a challenge if you do not have reliable transportation. I wonder if you think this will help bridge that gap in terms of someone who's

incarcerated at Florence McClure being able to stay in touch with her children, her family and being able to keep that bond going even if her relatives do not have reliable transportation to do an in-person visit.

Do you think this might ever be expanded to video visits where mom might be able to see her son or daughter, and then they could see her in the future? If that is not appropriate for you, I can ask the DOC officials about that.

MR. GRINSTEIN:

For the first part of your question about the number of people who have benefited, the report from the DOC, [Exhibit H](#), does not have a number for the number of people who've placed free phone calls. It does state that during the first six months of the pilot program, the average number of offenders housed at Florence McClure was about 691—a little less than 700. I do know that 93,394 free phone calls were completed during the duration of the pilot program that the report is studying.

I think you do raise a really important point that it is critical and emphasizing that for a lot of families, the cost of staying in touch with their incarcerated loved ones, be it by traveling to a prison or by staying in touch over the phone, is really prohibitive. This is especially true in a large state like Nevada where if you live in Reno, it might not be economically feasible to drive or fly down to Las Vegas to go visit your loved one at Florence McClure. That is one issue that this bill is seeking to rectify.

Regarding the second part of your question about whether this program might ever be expanded to video calls, the bill text for [S.B. 323](#) does state that the bill would apply also to video calls should they eventually be introduced. It is my understanding from the DOC that there is a plan to introduce tablets which would have a video call capability to prisons across the State because of a bill that the Legislature passed in the last session. I do not believe that those tablets are in place yet, but I will leave more specific technical questions to the DOC to answer.

SENATOR ELLISON:

I am hoping that maybe we will get the State to come in and give us a fiscal note about this bill. I had an employee that worked for me and once a month, I would look at the bill and see these high numbers of costs that were traced back to the company. I got a hold of Frontier at the time and asked what these

high costs were all about—come to find out it was an employee that works for me. Her son was calling from the jail two or three times a day. When we finally caught it and put a block on it, she asked to come back and pay for the debts. The problem is that is massively expensive. I could not believe how much it was for these calls coming from the jail and from the state prison on my business phone. She was calling and accepting the calls, and it was pretty expensive. By the time I got through everything and went back, we were probably talking a couple thousand dollars for three or four months. There's a problem with the cost that is coming from the prisons and from the jail.

MR. GRINSTEIN:

I will answer the question about cost in two ways. First, like I said before, I really see S.B. 323 as a long-term, cost-saving measure for the State, referencing the same research that I did before about how talking to family members consistently keeps children out of prison in the future. It also keeps people in prison from returning to prison after they've been released.

The second way I will tackle the funding question is by emphasizing that this is not a new expenditure for the State. Senate Bill No. 234 of the 82nd Session was signed into law and did not have a fiscal note because at that time, it was being funded by the inmate [Offenders'] Store fund, which is revenue from commissary purchases that feeds into something called the Inmate Welfare [Account] Fund. At the time in the last session, there was a \$14 million surplus in the Inmate Welfare [Account] fund, so S.B. No. 234 of the 82nd Session did not have a fiscal note because we were able to fund it with a preexisting pot of money. That pot of money unfortunately no longer exists in this session, so we do anticipate there being a fiscal note. However, that is not a new expenditure for the State; that's an existing sum of money that we are already spending, albeit from a different pot of money that I think is really worthwhile in the long term.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE:

I am not sure when this happened with the excessive calls to your business phone, but I do think there has been a shift in the way that the DOC views phone calls and approaches phone calls. They used to be a big moneymaker for correctional facilities, and it used to be that the prison would pay 6 cents a minute for a call but then turn around and charge the offender a dollar per minute for the call. Our Department has worked really hard to reduce those costs. That is kind of what the second section of the bill does—it says that the

prison can no longer use phone calls as a moneymaking mechanism. What you saw on that bill was likely reflective of how much money the DOC was making off of families who are putting money on that person's books or in that case, who are accepting the collect calls. Normally it would be the family members who paid the bill and not their employer, but we are trying to not put people in that situation where having contact with their son or daughter costs them thousands of dollars a month. They should be free to do 15 minutes a day. If they want and can afford to talk to them more often, that should be capped at 6 cents a minute or somewhere around there, and it should not be thousands of dollars for people to stay in touch.

SENATOR ELLISON:

I like the deal about the commissary, that they pay into it. That is a great idea, and I do not know why it went away. The other question is about S.B. 323 and the fiscal note being zero dollars.

MR. GRINSTEIN:

It is my understanding if there was going to be a fiscal note, I am pleasantly surprised that it is zero dollars right now, but I will leave those questions for Senator Scheible or for the Department.

SENATOR SCHEIBLE:

Yeah, let's go with a zero-dollar fiscal note and vote on it now before they can come up here and say anything!

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

I will take a personal point of privilege and say thank you for this, and I hope in the future we can expand this. I know it is an issue of access to justice. Often, I know there are individuals who will call their family and share information, and it is the family who kind of takes the lead on trying to hire attorneys, trying to find resources, wraparound services, et cetera. Allowing them to have constant daily communication makes it cheaper because often attorneys will charge for these consults, right? Sometimes it is the mom or sister or brother or boyfriend who gets a quick five-minute phone call with an attorney to see if they can potentially take the case. There are just so many different avenues of that. This conversation is important, so I appreciate you doing it.

At this time, I would like to invite those wishing to testify in support of S.B. 323 to please come forward.

KIMBERLY RENEE:

I strongly urge you to support this bill.

JAGADA CHAMBERS:

Senator Ellison really pierced me. During my incarceration, I went from a spring break to incarceration in Florida, and my parents had me calling twice on Monday and twice on Thursday. I went from naive in college to prison. I just continued to call. Those calls were \$38 back then; it was a little over \$2 and some cents a minute. I was just trying to be strong for my parents, but the reality of those calls is that they were very important to my family. The last time I spoke to both of my parents was on a prison phone call, so this is very sacred space for me. For the youngster who is presenting the bill: you're just fabulous—definitely an inspiration, and I am going to make sure my son watches this particular hearing. I just want to salute you all for being attentive to the folks that are incarcerated and really trying to humanize them.

NICK SHEPACK (Nevada State Director, Fines and Fees Justice Center):

I am very proud to have been able to work with Mr. Grinstein on this legislation as well as on the legislation last session. This is a family values bill that has immense returns—allowing people to stay in contact with their families while incarcerated is a key factor to successful reentry, and it benefits the family immediately, whether that is a child, adult, parent or a nephew; anything is extremely helpful. I have talked many times to the Director about this issue, and at a Board of Prison Commissioners meeting, he read letters that he received from the women at Florence McClure. I think it was possibly the first time he ever received fan mail from individuals inside the Nevada DOC. Those letters moved everyone in the audience to tears. This is an extremely important program. We need to continue it, and we ask for your support.

DENISE HEREDIA (Associate Director, Return Strong!):

We support S.B. 323 because family connection is essential for successful rehabilitation and reintegration. Half of incarcerated people in the United States are parents of minor children. Yet for many, a single phone call is their only link to a loved one. Often, these children that are left behind when one parent goes to prison are cared for by grandparents or other family members, not necessarily another parent. And moreover, no matter the form a family takes, maintaining these bonds is critical for emotional well-being and rehabilitation. This bill is a crucial step toward a correctional system that values people over profit. No one should have to choose between a vital family connection and financial stability.

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We urge you to pass S.B. 323, and we thank Max Grinstein and the bill sponsors and cosponsors for championing this cause.

TIA SMITH (American Civil Liberties Union of Nevada):  
We strongly support this bill, and we urge the committee to support it as well.

HARRISON EPSTEIN (Legal Extern, Clark County Public Defender's Office):  
We are excited to support S.B. 323 because, quite simply, it is good policy. Allowing women incarcerated at Florence McClure to have free communication with their families, their children, their parents and their loved ones for 15 minutes each day is an easy way to improve the lives of everybody involved. This is an important piece of the rehabilitative puzzle. It gives these women and their families hope, joy and connection. Passing S.B. 323 also recognizes and celebrates this body's votes in 2023 with the pilot program. You heard it from Mr. Grinstein and all of the people affected—this program works, and it should be made permanent.

ANGELA KNOTT (Washoe County Deputy Public Defender):  
It is a pleasure to be supporting a bill that will have a real impact on real people. Research shows that the majority of incarcerated women are mothers, the majority of which are single mothers. They often do not have the means to pay for a simple phone call; being able to communicate with a child or loved one can literally be a lifeline for women who are incarcerated. The simple act of hearing your child's voice can make a world of difference with how a mother survives incarceration. Maintaining a support system while incarcerated is essential for an easier transition. Once an incarcerated mother has served her time, it also helps ease the negative impacts of incarceration on children, and it supports stronger families in general. Not being able to put a few dollars on an account to make a phone call can be a harmful barrier to a single mother choosing a better life path for herself and for her children. Let's remove that barrier. We urge the committee to support and pass S.B. 323.

TONJA BROWN (Advocates for the Inmates and the Innocent):  
Thank you, Vice Chair, Senator Scheible and Mr. Grinstein, for bringing this forward—love the presentation. This is such a wonderful bill to what would become a permanent solution that will allow the inmate and the child to continue to nurture the bond that they have established. Family is so important to the inmates, and by keeping them connected, it is beneficial to their mental

and physical well-being. We strongly support S.B. 323, and we echo the previous comments that have been made.

YESENIA MOYA:

I am a community organizer, educator and artist, and I am here in strong support of S.B. 323. This is personal for me. This is a bill that affirms the dignity of incarcerated individuals and our families. As an organizer, my work is rooted in the values of justice, dignity and collective care—principles that demand we recognize the humanity in every person. As someone who has spent thousands of dollars through Securus and other vendors, I can't begin to express the importance of hearing the voice of my loved one. I have also helped raise funds for countless families so that they too can connect with their families. This bill is not asking for much, just a simple call that can make a difference to their child, parent or life partner. Strong family connections provide emotional support, stability and a sense of belonging. For children with incarcerated parents, regular communications are lifelines that help to mitigate trauma, maintain bonds, break cycles of injustice and reduce feelings of abandonment. Families provide the love and encouragement that can be a guiding force for rehabilitation and reintegration.

Prison phone systems have imposed undue financial burdens on families, disproportionately impacting low-income communities, Black and Indigenous families, and communities of color. The ability to communicate with loved ones should never be a privilege reserved for those who can afford it. I reiterate that it is a lifeline for those inside. Maintaining the connections reduces recidivism and is critical for reentry. Senate Bill 323 is about more than just phone calls, it is about keeping families together, honoring human dignity and challenging the unjust financial expectation of incarcerated individuals and their loved ones. I urge you to support S.B. 323 and stand with families, community members and advocates.

YVONNE EFVERLUND:

I have submitted my testimony ([Exhibit J](#)) to the committee. I am here today in strong support of S.B. 323 because I know firsthand how vital family connections are for those who are incarcerated as well as for those of us who wait each day to hear their voices. The financial burden of a simple phone call should not stand in the way of families staying connected. Imagine being a child who can only hear their parent's voice once a month because the cost is too high. This is a heartbreaking reality for far too many families across Nevada, and

this is devastating because these families deserve better. They deserve the chance to stay connected, to heal and to support each other.

Senate Bill 323 is a step toward recognizing what research has constantly proven. When incarcerated individuals maintain strong family ties, they are more likely to succeed upon release and less likely to return to prison. These phone calls are not just a convenience, they are a lifeline. They are critical to rehabilitation, mental well-being and ultimately breaking the destructive cycle of incarceration. A simple "I love you" or "I am proud of you" can mean everything to someone in prison, offering the hope and strength they need to fight for a better future. I urge you to pass S.B. 323 because this bill is not just about phone calls, it is about investing in people, families and a system that values connections over isolation. Let's support families, and let's support the hope for a better tomorrow. I also hope that this program can be implemented in all of the facilities across Nevada.

BRITTANY KEMP:

I am here as a representative for myself, Make It Work Nevada and in solidarity with mass liberation and in strong support of S.B. 323. Staying connected to family and loved ones is essential for rehabilitation, emotional well-being and successful re-entry back home. Studies show that maintaining regular communication with support networks reduces recidivism and improves the outcomes for both incarcerated people and their families. High cost of prison phone calls creates an unnecessary financial burden, disproportionately affecting low-income families. By passing S.B. 323, Nevada can show support for strong family connections, mental health and overall well-being of our communities. I strongly urge the committee to support S.B. 323.

VICE CHAIR FLORES:

The committee has also received two letters ([Exhibit K](#)) in support for S.B. 323. I will now close the hearing on S.B. 323.

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CHAIR SCHEIBLE:

Seeing no public comment, this meeting is adjourned at 2:11 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

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Timothy Gibbs,  
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

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Senator Melanie Scheible, Chair

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

<b>EXHIBIT SUMMARY</b>				
<b>Bill</b>	<b>Exhibit Letter</b>	<b>Introduced on Minute Report Page No.</b>	<b>Witness / Entity</b>	<b>Description</b>
	A	1		Agenda
	B	1		Attendance Roster
S.B. 4	C	2	Jered McDonald	Work Session Document
S.B. 13	D	3	Jered McDonald	Work Session Document
S.B. 88	E	4	Jered McDonald	Work Session Document
S.B. 140	F	7	Jered McDonald	Work Session Document
S.B. 323	G	10	Max Grinstein	Voluntary Questionnaire
S.B. 323	H	12	Max Grinstein	DOC Report
S.B. 323	I	12	Max Grinstein	Handout
S.B. 323	J	19	Yvonne Efverlund	Letter in Support
S.B. 323	K	20	Senator Edgar Flores	Two Letters in Support