



Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association

44 School Street, Suite 300
Boston, Massachusetts 02108



February 5, 2024

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Hampden County

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Representative Carlos Gonzalez, Co-Chair
Senator Walter F. Timilty, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security
(Sent Via Email Only)

Re: HB 2314/SB1541- *An Act to Strengthen Family and Community Connection with Incarcerated People and An Act to Strengthen Visitation Rights of Incarcerated People.*

Dear Chair Gonzalez and Chair Timilty,

On behalf of the Massachusetts Sheriffs' Association (MSA) and the fourteen duly elected Sheriffs of the Commonwealth, I write in my capacity as Executive Director to ask the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to report out unfavorably on House Bill (HB) 2314 and Senate Bill (SB) 1541— *An Act to Strengthen Family An Act to Strengthen Family and Community Connection with Incarcerated People*, sponsored by Representative Marjorie Decker, *An Act to Strengthen Visitation Rights of Incarcerated People*, sponsored by Senator Liz Miranda.

The Sheriffs share the priority of strengthening relationships with family members and loved ones through enhanced communication as well as finding a pathway of partnership for family engagement. Unfortunately, it cannot come at the expense of the safety of those in the Sheriff's care. One of the most significant security concerns with the bill as written is the mandate for "in-person" visitation and the potential for the introduction of contraband. The United States Supreme Court recognized even with pretrial detainees the potential for the introduction of contraband is so high that to this day, there is no constitutional right to a "contact visit." Such a mandate would provide a direct portal for the introduction of dangerous and deadly contraband.

While we recognize the Opioid Crisis as a public health emergency, the persons who profit from it are relentless in their efforts to deliver their deadly wares behind the walls, where drug profits skyrocket in value and the incarcerated are diverted from the path of recovery or even worse, death. Such a scenario has resulted in countless criminal charges for "first time offenders," coerced by the drug distributors to convey narcotics to incarcerated contacts. Understanding the need to keep family members and loved ones connected, we have enhanced communication with video visitation, the use of tablets and now, no-cost calling. The priority remains for the Sheriffs to keep loved ones connected, but it must be balanced with the need to protect all who live and work in our correctional facilities.

We respectfully request **the Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security to report out unfavorably on this legislation.** Please do not hesitate to reach out to us if you require additional information or have any questions.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carrie Hill". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Carrie Hill
Executive Director