

Glenn Ingalls
Gorham, ME - Courage House

My name is Glenn Ingalls. I'm a resident of the Courage House in Gorham. I got out of prison back in September after spending the last few years inside.

During the pandemic, we were getting two free calls a week in Windham, but a lot of guys were still going a couple weeks at a time without talking to their families. And at the county jails, it's a lot worse, especially Aroostook County Jail and Penobscot County Jail.

In my experience, if people don't have money, they'll do anything they can to get access to the phone. Guys are gambling with each other over phone minutes. If they have candy bars or packages of Ramen noodles from the commissary, they barter that stuff for phone minutes. If there's a weaker guy, maybe a sex offender, it's just a matter of time before somebody roughs him up into letting them use his phone minutes. Put simply, when the phones are this expensive, it causes a lot of conflict among the inmates.

Also, while it's true that you're supposed to get free calls to your lawyer, it doesn't always work out that way. You need to find the right cop. A lot of correctional officers won't help you at all. And then you've got to pray that your lawyer actually picks up when you call. Sometimes it can take multiple attempts to get through, and by the time you do, it can cost a lot. In my experience, there's a lot of people where, if they could just talk to their family members, or their lawyers, they might be able to post bail and get out of jail pretty quickly. They could be treated fairly. So you've got to understand - the cost of the phone affects a lot more than how much time you can spend talking on it. Take away the phone, and guys end up sitting inside a lot longer than they would otherwise have to, getting mistreated when they ought to have some dignity.

When the phone works, there's no feeling in the world better than getting to talk to the people who still love us. It's frustrating though. The phone system is so hard to use, if you have an elderly parent or something, it might be too much for them to figure out. Then, even though they want to talk to you, they can't get the phone to work. Or you don't have the phone numbers, but it will cost too much for you to call around to collect them all. My sister sent me a letter with phone numbers for everybody in my family. Without that, my sentence would have been a lot lonelier, and I'm not sure how I would have ever lined up a recovery house for when I got out.

If I hadn't been able to talk to people in the community while I was incarcerated, I might have just gone right back. That's what I've been doing for years now. Bouncing in and out. I'm so glad that phase of my life is now over, and I'm part of the community again.

Please vote to support LD 1175 and help us lower the cost of these calls.

Thank you.