

Hello,

My name is Anthony Jackson and for the past six years I've been an inmate at the Rhode Island department of corrections serving a 15 year sentence. First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to all who are reading or hearing the words of the message I am trying to convey through this letter. A letter written by not just an inmate with a checkered past, but by an individual that has spent the last six years of his life devoting his incarceration to self-betterment. I have been aligning myself with the tools and knowledge needed for a successful reintegration back into society when the time comes. I have learned that one of the most crucial tools needed for post incarceration success is support from loved ones. The way in which we communicate is how inmates and loved ones are able to establish, maintain, and enhance our support for one another.

These means of communication are through phone calls, emails, postal mail, video visits, and in-person visits. All of which that come with a cost; 20 minute phone calls are \$0.60, e-mails are \$0.25 per message, video visits come out to a \$5 charge, and a book of stamps to use for postal mail comes with a price tag of \$7.30. I know that these prices may not seem like much, but for someone like myself who is only able to earn up to \$3 a day with my current RIDOC job, these prices are pretty steep. Especially since inmates are only paid once a month, the RIDOC automatically sets aside 25% of our pay to be saved, my hygiene products for the month cost about \$20, and I put \$20 of my pay towards phone calls which allows for me to make one phone call per day each month. After monthly expenses I am left with about \$25 to purchase food through our already inflated priced commissary system. I know what you may be thinking, "Why doesn't he just ask his loved ones for money to help him with this issue?" and my response to the question is that, it proves to be very difficult asking anyone for money in light of our current economic climate and asking anyone for money when I am solely responsible for putting myself in prison seems to feel like pulling others down with me, taking money out of the hands of those who need to feed others just doesn't sit well with me.

I would like for all of you to know that the push for free means of communication isn't just about inmates and our loved ones saving money, but rather a movement towards removing unnecessary roadblocks that hinder us from lowering our risk of recidivism and diminishing barriers that keep us from substantially increasing our chances at a successful reintegration back in to our society.

A former RIDOC official once asked the questions of "Do we want a prison system that breeds a better criminal? Or do we want an institution that breeds a better human being?"

I am currently writing to you as a CCRI student, a mentor in the RIDOC's mentoring program, a mindfulness apprentice for the Prison Mindfulness Institute, and a service dog trainer for disabled individuals in our communities through the NEADS organization. I mention these labels in hopes that you all understand that I whole heartedly believe that the RIDOC is capable of breeding a better human being. So I ask all who are willing, influential, or compelled; will you assist in the efforts of helping Rhode Island develop better human beings?

Sincerely, Anthony D. Jackson

ID # 146005