



ALAN WILSON
ATTORNEY GENERAL

January 25, 2023

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Hakeem S. Jeffries
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives
2433 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
United States Senate
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

RE: Promoting Technological Solutions to Combat Contraband Wireless Device Use in Correctional Facilities

Dear Congressional Leaders:

As you know, inmate use of contraband cell phones is one of the most serious issues facing prison administrators today. Inmates use contraband cell phones to organize murders, riots, drug deals, fraud, and much more. By utilizing contraband cell phones inmates are easily able to continue their criminal activities from inside prison. In South Carolina, this is a recurring problem despite our diligent efforts to stop it.

In South Carolina over the past five years, there have been four major drug trafficking cases where the operation is being run behind prison walls through the use of contraband cell phones—with the most recent operation being directly related to a Mexican drug cartel. Additionally, in 2018, gang-affiliated inmates in a maximum-security South Carolina prison used cell phones to organize and coordinate a brutal attack that killed seven inmates and injured many more. If inmates were blocked from using contraband cell phones, we could prevent serious levels of drug trafficking, deadly riots and other crimes from happening.

But this is a significant problem across the country, not isolated to one state. In Oklahoma, 69 defendants were convicted of involvement in a “drug trafficking operation that was primarily directed and controlled by incarcerated gang members using contraband cell phones from their state prison cells.” In Tennessee, a Memphis inmate used a contraband cell phone to orchestrate drug conspiracy deals by sending a FedEx package full of methamphetamine to his girlfriend. Then in Georgia, inmates used contraband cell phones to make scam calls and demand payment and even texted photos of bloodied inmates to the relatives demanding cash. And according to the Indiana Department of Corrections, this past year, a gang’s enforcer incarcerated within Indiana Department of Corrections ordered a double homicide hit using a contraband cell phone behind prison walls.

Simply, we need Congress to pass legislation giving states the authority to implement a cell phone jamming system to protect inmates, guards, and the public at large.

It is our understanding that Tennessee Congressman David Kustoff introduced bills H.R. 1954 in the 116th Congress and H.R. 8645 in the 117th Congress, and that South Carolina Congressmen William Timmons, Jeff Duncan and Ralph Norman have all been cosponsors. It is also our understanding that Senator Tom Cotton introduced similar legislation in the Senate, with Senator Lindsey Graham as a co-sponsor, S. 4699 (117th Congress) , but that the bills have not seen any movement and never received a vote.

We strongly urge Congress to pass meaningful legislation, through this bill or another, to allow states to jam contraband cell phones—and quickly. Right now, these cell phones are still being used, with no way to block them, and are posing an active threat to public safety.


We understand that what works for one state may not work for another, and that as long as there are prisons there will always be contraband. But in the case of jamming contraband use of cell phones, however, this is an urgent issue that affects not only South Carolina, but every state.

A prison cell is no place for access to a cell phone.

Sincerely,



Alan Wilson
Attorney General of South Carolina



Steve Marshall
Attorney General of Alabama



Treg Taylor
Attorney General of Alaska



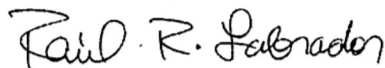
Tim Griffin
Attorney General of Arkansas



Ashley Moody
Attorney General of Florida



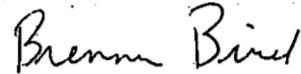
Chris Carr
Attorney General of Georgia



Raúl Labrador
Attorney General of Idaho



Todd Rokita
Attorney General of Indiana



Brenna Bird
Attorney General of Iowa



Daniel Cameron
Attorney General of Kentucky



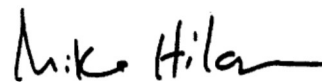
Jeff Landry
Attorney General of Louisiana




Lynn Fitch
Attorney General of Mississippi



Austin Knudsen
Attorney General of Montana



Mike Hilgers
Attorney General of Nebraska



John M. Formella
Attorney General of New Hampshire



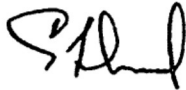
Jonathan Skrmetti
Attorney General of Tennessee



Dave Yost
Attorney General of Ohio



Ken Paxton
Attorney General of Texas



Gentner F. Drummond
Attorney General of Oklahoma



Sean Reyes
Attorney General of Utah



Marty Jackley
Attorney General of South Dakota



Jason Miyares
Attorney General of Virginia