**Subject:** Letter of Opposition - SB 555 Jails and Juvenile Facilities: Telephone Services: Stores

**Department:** County Administration  
**Contact:** Brian Ring  
**Phone:** 530.552.3311  
**Meeting Date Requested:** June 25, 2019

**Regular Agenda [✓]**  
**Consent Agenda [☐]**

**Department Summary:** (Information provided in this section will be included on the agenda. Attach explanatory memorandum and other background as necessary).

Per direction from the Board of Supervisors at the June 11, 2019 Meeting, staff have prepared a letter of opposition to Senate Bill 555 which would impose statutory requirements for communication services and goods sold at a "jail store." Proceeds raised for providing these services are deposited into the inmate welfare fund. This bill would jeopardize the programs currently funded by these proceeds.

**Fiscal Impact:**
None

**Personnel Impact:**
None

**Action Requested:**
Approve letter and authorize the Chair to sign.

**Administrative Office Review:** Brian Ring, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer
June 25, 2019

The Honorable Holly Mitchell  
Member, California State Senate  
State Capital Room, 5050  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: SB 555 – Jails and juvenile facilities: telephone services: stores OPPOSE

Dear Senator Mitchell,

On behalf of the Butte County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to express our concerns and opposition to Assembly Bill 555, which would impose statutory requirements for communication service contract that will negatively impact inmates.

This bill would specify that contracts for inmate communication services must be awarded to an entity that meets the facility’s “technical, functional, and security requirements” and provides the lowest cost of service to the person who pays for the service. This language could disqualify a contract that may provide a better overall service and instead promote an inferior contract that happens to offer a slightly lower rate for phone calls.

SB 555 additionally prohibits certain payments from phone providers to correctional facility operators. Under existing law, any such payment is required to be deposited in the inmate welfare fund (IWF). Existing statute specifies what may be paid for by the IWF, and as a practical matter, IWFs pay for inmate education, religious materials, vocational training, recreational equipment, and clothing and hygiene supplies for indigent inmates who are being released. Additionally, the bill provides that goods sold at the “jail store” or canteen must be sold at cost, despite the fact that current law requires any profit to be deposited in the IWF. Finally, the measure eliminates flexibility on how IWF funds may be spent despite current statutory protections ensuring the resulting programs benefit inmates.

It is highly unlikely that counties will be able to backfill the funds used to benefit inmates that will be lost if this bill is approved. This bill will jeopardize the programs funded by IWFs despite the important role they play in helping ensure the success of Realignment.
The amendments adopted in the Senate Appropriations Committee will only serve to temporarily delay the bill’s devastating financial blow to inmate services.

Should you have any questions regarding our position, please do not hesitate to contact Brian Ring, Assistant Chief Administrative Officer at 530.552.3311.

Respectfully submitted,

Steve Lambert, Chair
Butte County Board of Supervisors

cc:  Members, Butte County Board of Supervisors
     The Honorable Jim Gallagher, Member, California State Assembly
     The Honorable Jim Nielsen, Member, California State Senate
     The Honorable Bryon Jones-Sawyer, Chair of the Assembly Public Safety Committee
     The Honorable Nancy Skinner, Chair of the Senate Public Safety Committee
     Paul Yoder, Shaw/Yoder/Antwih, Inc.
     Rural County Representatives of California