



---

## SECURUS' (& PLATINUM EQUITY'S) COMMITMENTS & WORTH RISES' RESPONSES

### 1. Accessibility and Affordability

*"While Securus has reduced the average cost of calls by 30% over the past 3 years, not all consumers felt the same relief. The company pledges to work with all our institutional customers to broaden rate relief for more consumers by targeting the elimination of legacy outlier rates and reinvesting in the development innovations and tools to further reduce costs."*

- RESPONSE: Securus has never proactively or willingly reduced its rates. Its agency customers and elected officials forced them down in response to the hard work of many advocates across the country, despite Securus' protests and opposition lobbying efforts. Still, it is good to hear Securus executives say that they will broaden rate relief and eliminate particularly egregious rates. However, we would be interested in knowing what they consider "outlier" rates. At what point would Securus executives consider a call so expensive that it qualifies for reform? When a 15-minute phone call is over \$15? That would be more than 70 contracts. \$10? More than 220 contracts. \$5? More than 450 contracts. And what innovations are going to help reduce rates? In 2016, Securus announced that it had processed over 30 million calls over voice over internet protocol (VoIP), technology that it claimed would allow the corporation to provide service at a lower cost. Yet, in Massachusetts, for example, it claims its VoIP technology allows it to circumvent state rate caps and charge more than all other corporations. (We asked for rate relief in our demands.)

*"In 2019 Securus became the only service provider to announce full neutrality on the presence of site commissions and the provision of products regardless of the funding source and model determined by each locality. The organization will build on that in 2020 by working with all interested institutional customers on implementing these lower-cost-to-consumer alternatives."*

- RESPONSE: Years ago, Securus and other prison telecom corporations introduced site commissions to win contracts over traditional telecom corporations. For years, it passed on the cost of those site commissions to families. Now that budget-strapped states and counties have come to depend on those revenues to fund their correctional agencies and court systems, Securus claims neutrality and suggests these states and counties are to blame. While they certainly carry their fair share, Securus does not have clean hands

here. They must be more than neutral to undo the harm it has caused. And with regard to *announcing* neutrality on funding source—families or government—Securus' hand was forced once again when they were caught lobbying in Connecticut against a bill that would have made phone calls free for incarcerated people and their families. They spent six weeks and \$40,000 fearmongering the Governor's office and Department of Corrections, and the bill failed. But we are glad that Securus has changed its stance on this issue and will refrain from lobbying on similar legislation in the future. (We asked Securus to commit to not lobbying against legislation and to offer all agencies government-paid options in our demands.)

*"Securus will reduce the application of third-party funding fees by investing in technology solutions where possible - and negotiating lower rates where outside vendors are still required - to provide savings to consumers of at least 35% on these fees by year end."*

- RESPONSE: While we're glad to hear that Securus aims to lower its deposit fees and money transfer rates by 35%, it's not enough and blaming outside vendors reflects the inability of its executives to take responsibility for its predatory practices. In the free world, commercial payment processing fees are rarely more than 3%. But rather than charging \$0.30 for a \$10 money transfer, for example, Securus often charges \$3.95. Ironically, the fee to deposit money onto one of their phone accounts is \$3 for a \$10 transfer or any transfer up to \$50. Why? Because it's the max allowable by the FCC, which only has authority over communications services. This is not a matter of vendors, this is Securus pointing fingers at some else for an exploitative practice it can unilaterally address. (We asked Securus to reduce rates for deposit fees and money transfers in our demands.)

## 2. Transparency

*"Securus will provide a clear and simple recitation of call rates to both customers and consumers, ensuring that those call rates are always available online and at the time of each call before they are accepted."*

- RESPONSE: This is not a new commitment. Since 2015, the FCC has required prison telecom corporations to "be transparent with regard to disclosure of their rates and policies." Either Platinum Equity is admitting that Securus has openly flouted FCC regulations up to this point, or it is trying to take credit for a change that happened five years ago. (This was not a demand.)

*"The Company will commission an annual report of inmate calling costs, produced and published by an independent third party, including a breakdown of what is being charged beyond the specific cost of the call (for example, additional costs necessary for the provision of safety protocols and service)."*

- RESPONSE: Every year, the FCC collects data from prison telecom corporations regarding their rates and charging practices to "ensure that they are just and reasonable." And every

year, Securus redacts thousands of data points before its records are released to the public, and it routinely contests data demands in litigation and public policy debates. Any independent effort to audit call rates cannot be explained by an effort to be transparent. It is instead an attempt to explain away the exorbitant costs that Securus is charging families by fearmongering about safety and security. Out of the 250 counties with the most expensive contracts in the country, roughly 220 of them contract with Securus. They will attempt to claim the cost of calls is lower than its competitors, but that its surveillance technology is superior and costs more, leading to a higher cost of calls. Unless it is paired with an effort to get government agencies to pay for surveillance technology, this audit is an insincere effort to justify rates that are paid by families. We would also like to know what firm will be conducting these independent audits. (This was not a demand.)

*"Securus will publish by the middle of this year an industry-leading report detailing a terms-of-use policy for its products, and memorializing comprehensive data privacy standards."*

- RESPONSE: Publishing terms of use and data privacy policy is not an industry-leading report. This effort to publish policies and standards is Securus' attempt to clean its hands of the ways that law enforcement misuses its data. Securus is responsible for how its customers use the data it puts in their hands. (This was not a demand.)

### 3. Education, Reentry and Recidivism

*"Securus will immediately sign the Society for Human Resource Management Getting Talent Back to Work Pledge."*

- RESPONSE: The Getting Talent Back to Work Pledge is a program sponsored by Koch Industries resulting from the First Step Act, which had many provisions that benefited the prison industry. Still, we support fair hiring for formerly incarcerated people, but have doubts about the sincerity of Securus, a company that exploits incarcerated people and their families, in hiring them. Securus has hired formerly incarcerated people in the past and used them to whitewash the corporation's predatory practices. (This was not a demand.)

*"The Company will contribute at least \$3 million in 2020 to efforts focused on reducing recidivism rates and improving reentry rates, including support for The Securus Foundation to connect justice agencies more closely to their communities utilizing technology."*

- RESPONSE: The Securus Foundation is a structure that Securus' uses to whitewash its predatory practices. It puts a small portion of the money that Securus has extracted from poor people through its exorbitant pricing into the organizations that serve them, collecting charitable tax benefits in the process. And it's not just the Foundation. The Detroit Pistons, owned by Tom Gores of Platinum Equity, gives to and highlights the Pure Heart Foundation, which serves children with incarcerated parents. Additionally, the Foundation has done work for the corporation. Worth Rises has received calls from formerly

incarcerated employees at The Securus Foundation asking about our influence over contracts in county jails that we have worked with. (This was not a demand.)

*“The Company will create a post-incarceration scholarship program to facilitate the completion of post-secondary degrees begun under Securus’ existing educational product and service opportunities.”*

- RESPONSE: People leaving prison and jail would benefit more from having the money that they spend on phone calls and other Securus’ services than any scholarship program. Upon release, people are looking for ways to secure housing, pay bills, and buy food first. Thanks to the millions that Securus extracts from them every year, their ability to do so is hindered and, with that, their ability to pursue post-secondary degrees. In fact, this commitment is remarkably patronizing in that it takes money from incarcerated people and their families and purports to give it back to them if spent the way Securus deems appropriate. (This was not a demand.)

#### 4. Listening and Responsiveness

*“Mr. Abel and other company executives will meet each quarter with families and individuals personally impacted by incarceration to hear their recommendations and address their concerns about the company’s products and services.”*

- RESPONSE: Company executives have had opportunities to hear from people directly impacted by their services. Through representatives of the Foundation, we sought an onsite visit and meetings with the corporation. Tom Gores and Platinum Equity executives also had opportunities. They agreed in November 2019 to meet with us and families; we hoped to help shape the reforms that they released. Executives in both corporations ignored emails, failed to confirm dates, and cancelled meetings. Based on these past events, efforts to meet with and listen to directly impacted people are clearly insincere. We have significant concerns that Platinum Equity and Securus will exploit families through their proposed listening sessions to hear what they want to. (This was not one of our original demands, but rather a demand made through our months of conversations.)

*“Company leaders will also meet with corrections facility customers, correctional trade associations and advocates of alternative incarceration approaches to hear their recommendations and hear their concerns.”*

- RESPONSE: Securus already meets with customers and correctional trade associations, a lot. In fact, Securus has paid for exhibitions at correctional trade shows for years. (This was not a demand.)

## 5. Technology and Innovation

*“Securus pledges to invest at least \$40 million this year in facility communication infrastructure for the advancement of public safety and community needs.”*

- RESPONSE: We need more information but hope this includes increasing the ratio of phones to people in facilities. (This was not a demand.)

*“The Company will devote at least \$30 million to fund innovations in the development of secure products to take on the ever-evolving challenges facing correctional agencies in the new decade.”*

- RESPONSE: This is an investment in more surveillance technology for law enforcement. Existing technology (e.g. voice biometrics) is already critically concerning. We do not need Securus to invest in new surveillance technology. (This was not a demand.)