

IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New state law gives MDOC another way to combat contraband cellphones

JACKSON, MISS. - The Mississippi Department of Corrections has a new way to attack the widespread use of contraband cellphones in the state prison system.

A new law allows a circuit court to issue an order to disable a cellphone determined to be used by incarcerated individuals.

Senate Bill 2704, signed by Gov. Phil Bryant, took effect upon passage. The new law resulted from an amendment to statute § 47-5-193.

“This is another measure that is necessary to address contraband cellphones in our correctional facilities,” Commissioner Pelicia E. Hall said. “Cellphones are one of the major contraband issues not just in Mississippi, but nationwide.”

MDOC’s Zero Tolerance initiative to reduce contraband resulted in the seizure of 11,863 cellphones in 2018 from among the 30-plus facilities, including prisons, community work centers, regional jails and restitution centers. The number is 635 for the first three months of this year.

“We will continue to be aggressive in our efforts to combat cellphones because of their threat to public safety,” Commissioner Hall said. “The assertion that incarcerated persons need cellphones because of the expensive inmate telephone cost is not valid.”

MDOC lowered inmate telephone calls from 11 cents per minute to .039 per minute in March 2018 to make the service more accessible and affordable for

family members. The change was the second rate drop since March 2016 when the FCC mandated lower rates per minute for calls in prison systems.