

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Carla Sears and my son has been incarcerated at OSP for the last nine years. I live in Chiloquin, Oregon, which is about four hours away, so it is very difficult for me to visit him in person. We rely on the phone to stay in touch.

Unfortunately, there have been many periods during which I lacked a steady income and could not put money on the phone account. I remember numerous instances when both of us could have benefitted from a conversation, but we could not afford to call. One such example was when my sister, his aunt, passed away by suicide. Another example was when my son's father passed away. Just because a person is locked up does not mean they don't need to process these kinds of losses. They are still human, and they are still members of a family. I truly feel that my son could have processed his grief around his father's death in a much more healthy and effective way if we were able to spend more time talking with each other. I know that I personally could have gotten through a lot of situations out here in the world a lot easier if I had been able to hear my son's voice and receive his love and encouragement. Communication between a prisoner and their family is more precious and meaningful than most people can imagine. Just hearing your loved one's voice can cause healing.

Although my son is incarcerated, I do not believe he should be prevented from reaching out to his family in our time of need. No person should be limited in their healing and growth because of lack of money. Making prison phone calls free is an important cause and I appreciate everyone who is investing their time and energy into it.

Sincerely,

Carla Sears
Chiloquin, Oregon