

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Jennifer Wells and I live in Sutherlin, Oregon. My son is incarcerated at OSP, which is two and a half hours away, so I haven't been able to see him in a year. He has been incarcerated multiple times, probably for seven or eight years in total, and the phones have served as our primary means of communication during that time, along with periodic video calls. We try to talk at least a couple of times per week but it is dependent on our finances. I don't have a lot of money, so we have to keep phone calls limited to \$20 per month. When I had more money, that number was closer to \$30.

I talk with my son about how he is feeling, the work he's putting in towards changing his behaviors, and how he is learning and growing from his mistakes. Recently, he has been keeping me updated on his progress in his parenting class. These phone calls have been absolutely crucial for maintaining our relationship. There is not even a scale it can be measured on, they have been so important. Without them, my son would hit rock bottom. I've watched him spiral before, and sometimes just hearing the voice of a loved one can change his mindset in that moment. It happened just a few weeks ago when he heard his son's voice. We were all together celebrating Christmas, in one place at one time, and were able to include him over the phone. My son said he hadn't realized how much he needed that connection, and afterwards, his outlook was much more positive.

While I make it work, it's a real struggle to afford these calls. It would be so wonderful if they were free. We wouldn't have to worry about paydays or scraping together money to add to the phone account. I have other kids and a grandchild, all of whom are going through things that require financial support, too. It often feels like I'm forced to choose between them, which is a terrible feeling. I think HB 3118 would be a great thing not just for my son, but for other inmates too. Some people can't even talk to their family at all. I think it's important for these people who are incarcerated to have hope and sometimes all that is, is a phone call.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Wells  
Sutherlin, Oregon  
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