



## Testimony in support of HB 3118

It is time for Oregon to join California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Minnesota in providing free communication services for adults in custody, and we the undersigned from the Multnomah County Democrats' Criminal Justice Study Group encourage the passing of **HB 3118**.

The Oregon DOC “recognizes telephone services are a positive means to strengthen ties and increase the likelihood of success upon release.” However, the cost of growing and maintaining the relationships critical to rehabilitation and re-entry through phone calls can be prohibitively expensive, especially to the most financially vulnerable Oregonians. In 2024, the former Oregon Corrections Ombudsman noted that some family members of incarcerated individuals were spending up to \$1,000 a year to communicate with their loved ones in prison.

The cost of providing this critical service for free is estimated to be just 3-5 million dollars a year--a tiny fraction of the 2025-2027 \$2.5 billion total agency request budget for the Oregon Department of Corrections. This relatively small investment can yield huge outcomes in terms of rehabilitation and re-entry. According to Emily Mooney and Nila Bala, “families can offer critical emotional and psychological support for these individuals during incarceration and following release. Indeed, research demonstrates that supportive relationships are critical to promoting both physiological and psychological health, whereas stress-filled ones or social isolation can encourage mental and physiological harm.”<sup>1</sup> Phone calls and other forms of communication services offer the most timely and convenient way for families to provide such support and care.

We thank you in advance for your support of HB 3118.

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<sup>1</sup>Emily Mooney and Nila Bala, “The Importance of Supporting Family Connections to Ensure Successful Re-entry” R STREET SHORTS NO. 63 October 2018 [located at: <https://www.rstreet.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/Final-Short-No.-63-1.pdf>]