

HB 3118



Requires the Department of Corrections to enter into a contract with a third party to provide communications services at no cost to persons confined at a Department of Corrections institution

1 Issue:

In the United States carceral system, inmates are required to pay a fee to speak with their loved ones via audio or video call. In Oregon this fee is charged at a rate of 0.9 cents per minute, whereas the federal rate is 0.6 cents per minute. Some states have removed the fee altogether, making it more accessible for inmates to connect with the outside world.

- Charging inmates and their families with a fee to speak to one another creates a **financial barrier** for many who do not have the means to pay the fee. Some families report that they have to choose between giving money for their loved ones phone accounts or paying their rent and buying groceries. This should not have to be a choice that families have to make.
- Studies show that inmate phone calls are a way to maintain **connection** and serve several benefits such as **reduced recidivism, emotional support, and preparation for reintegration**.

2 Solution:

To alleviate this financial barrier, HB 3118 proposes that the Department of Corrections would give persons in custody **access to some communication services for free**.

- HB 3118 would require the Department of Corrections to enter into a **contract with a third party** to provide communication services at no cost to persons confined at the Department of Corrections institution.
- HB 3118 **prohibits the receipt of financial or in-kind compensation** by the department for providing communications services to persons in custody.
- The bill directs the department to submit a progress report on the implementation of the Act to the Legislative Assembly by February 1, 2026, and a biennial report on certain data to the Legislative Assembly no later than September 15 of each even-numbered year.

By removing the financial burden on inmate's and their families to pay for communication, we can take a step in the right direction towards a more just system.

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