

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Alyssa Williams, and I live in Roseburg, Oregon. My brother is currently incarcerated at OSP. Before starting his most recent sentence around a year ago, he served a five year sentence for a different case. During that incarceration, phone calls were our primary way of communicating.

We enjoyed talking about all sorts of things, such as our family members, relationships, and the programs and clubs he participated in. He was especially grateful for any update I could provide on how his son was doing. Although he put himself there, the prison environment could be quite depressing. Our calls helped him keep going day to day, making him feel less alone and reminding him that there were people who cared about him and wanted to see him do better. Maintaining a strong relationship with him has always been important to me.

I was able to afford calls with him then because I was employed. Even still, finances were tight. I was able to call him a lot less often than I wanted to, and when we did talk, our calls felt rushed and urgent, as both of us were worried about the account balance draining with each passing minute. The attitude was often, "I love you, make it quick."

As of the last year he has been incarcerated, I have not even been able to afford that. I was unemployed for the first eight months of his incarceration. Now, I have thankfully found a new job, but I am still recovering financially. I have therefore not been able to afford to call him at all. The cost of phone calls has been a barrier that has completely taken away our relationship over the past year. The only opportunities I've had to communicate with him have been through calls set up by my mother.

If phone calls were free, my brother and I could actually talk to each other. I would like to have the ability to talk with him not just about the most significant events in our lives, but about the little things. Making phone calls free would be wonderful for my relationship with my brother. It would also relieve a massive amount of stress for other inmates and their families. I'm very excited about the prospect of prison phone calls being made free.

Sincerely,

Alyssa Williams
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