

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Jacqueline Smith and my husband is incarcerated at OSP. My husband is the love of my life. We have known each other for fifty years and been back together for ten years. He has been incarcerated the whole time we've been back together. I don't drive, so when I want to visit him, I have to plan the trip ahead of time. I have to take the train down from Portland, stay in Salem overnight, visit him the next morning, and then take the train back to Portland before it gets dark. Over the last ten years, we have primarily stayed in touch through the phone and video visits. We talk on the phone as often as we're able to. Lately, money has been tight so we have had to cut back our calls to once or twice per week.

Phone calls have been vital for our ability to emotionally support each other through difficult times. Over the last couple years, my husband lost his beloved grandmother, who raised him, and his mother. And I lost my two sons, as well as my mother, whom I was extremely close with. I just had to spend the first holiday season ever without my mother and my two sons. I am also currently seeing a mental health counselor to help me work through trauma and abuse from my past. When we talk on the phone, the first thing my husband always asks is how I am feeling. When I am having a hard day emotionally, he reassures me that it is okay to not feel okay, that I don't have to expect myself to be on top of the world every day, and that it is natural to feel vulnerable sometimes. He apologizes for not being able to comfort me in person, but it has been okay because during our conversations, I feel him here with me spiritually.

Over the last ten years, we have spent close to \$10,000 on phone calls and video visits. This has been a huge burden, as I am disabled and on a fixed income. Living paycheck to paycheck, it has been hard to make sure I have money for phone calls on top of all my other financial obligations. As I mentioned, we have had to cut back on how often we call each other and that is purely to save money.

It would be wonderful if calls were free. We would be able to talk more often, and we wouldn't have to constantly stress about making the money on the account last until the end of the month. I could put that money towards bills or I could even send it to him for commissary. And then there are still other people who can't afford to put any money on the books and who can't talk to family at all. Of course, people in prison did wrong, and they are paying the price. But we don't need to take everything from them. It is already hard enough to be apart from family. So many people would love to call their family, just once a day or once a week, and say, "I miss you, how have you been doing?"

Sincerely,
Jacqueline Smith
Portland, OR