

Office Email
sen.kaysejama@oregonlegisla
ture.gov

Legislative Website
www.oregonlegislature.gov/Ja
ma



Capitol Phone
503-986-1724

Capitol Address
900 Court St. NE, S-409,
Salem, Oregon 97301

State Senator Kayse Jama

Senate District 24 (D-East Portland, Damascus, Boring)

Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Chotzen and Wallan, and Members of the Committee,

I write today in strong support of HB 3118, which would make communications for incarcerated people free by requiring the Department of Corrections to enter into a contract with a third party. The high cost of outgoing phone calls and in-person visits represents a significant barrier to regular communication between incarcerated people and their families. Without this critical emotional and logistical support, incarcerated persons face a more difficult path to re-integration. HB 3118 would reduce recidivism, keep families connected, minimize financial burden on families, and create more humane conditions for incarcerated individuals.

The monopolization of prison communication has allowed for third party companies to charge incarcerated people and their families exorbitant prices for simple services like phone calls and emails. In 2021, the average 15-minute outgoing phone call from an Oregon prison cost nearly \$3.00¹. Many families go into debt trying to stay in contact with their incarcerated loved ones, forcing them to decide between supporting those in prison or meeting the basic needs of family members on the outside². HB 3118 would provide long-overdue relief for these families.

The ability to contact family members also improves an incarcerated person's ability to find employment, housing, and health care after release³. Incarcerated people often rely on loved ones to navigate unfamiliar systems outside prison. Regular communication further improves mental health outcomes for family members on the outside—particularly for children with incarcerated parents. Studies show that with regular phone contact, parent-child relationships can improve, proving impactful on the academic and social performance of children with a parent in custody⁴.

While the downstream impacts of high communication costs on mental health and recidivism should be taken seriously, I also believe this is an issue of basic humanity. The ability to communicate with loved ones should not depend on someone's finances.

Thank you for considering my testimony. I strongly urge your support for HB 3118.

1. [State of Phone Justice. 2022. Appendix 5: Average jail calling rates in each state | Prison Policy Initiative](#)
2. <https://ellaba>
3. <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4229080/>
4. <https://www.prisonpolicy.org/scans/vera/the-family-and-recidivism.pdf>
5. https://www.prisonpolicy.org/blog/2021/12/21/family_contact/