

Dear Oregon legislators,

My name is Larry Williams and my son is incarcerated at OSP. My son has been in and out of custody since he was a young teenager, and he is thirty years old now. I live in Roseburg, Oregon, which is at least a few hours away from most of the facilities he has spent time at. I have a hard time visiting him in person anyways. As nice as it is to see him, it always pains me to leave with the knowledge that my son has to stay. Phone calls have therefore been the main way we have stayed in touch over the last fifteen or sixteen years. I haven't been able to speak with him during his most recent sentence due to registration issues, which I am trying to resolve. However, during previous sentences, we spoke a couple times per month. That was what we could afford.

My son has spent so much time in custody that in some ways it seems like the only life he knows. In addition to discussing our daily lives, I try to remind him of the activities waiting for him on the outside, such as fishing and camping. We always enjoyed doing those together, and I hope to do them with him again soon. My son has also had some positive experiences inside. I still remember his sense of accomplishment when he worked his way up to the lead position on a work crew. He called me as soon as he learned. No matter what, I always make sure to remind him that I love him and encourage him to keep his chin up. The ability to support my son in these ways is as important for me as it is for him. Our phone calls mean a lot to both of us.

The cost of phone calls has significantly affected myself and my wife. We have spent thousands of dollars on phone calls over the years. The cost of phone calls directly made us reduce how much we have called over the years. We also tried to keep calls short to save money. Instead of relaxing and having a natural conversation, we always tried to hurry through what we wanted to say. And phone calls have only gotten more difficult for me to afford. I lost my business during the COVID-19 pandemic, and I'm still struggling to recover financially. It is difficult enough to pay my own bills without also paying for phone calls. If phone calls were free, we would have been able to speak more often in more depth.

These days, it feels like wages stay the same while everything gets more expensive. Any help people can get would go a long way. I believe phone calls should be free for all AICs and their families.

Sincerely,

Larry Williams
Roseburg, OR