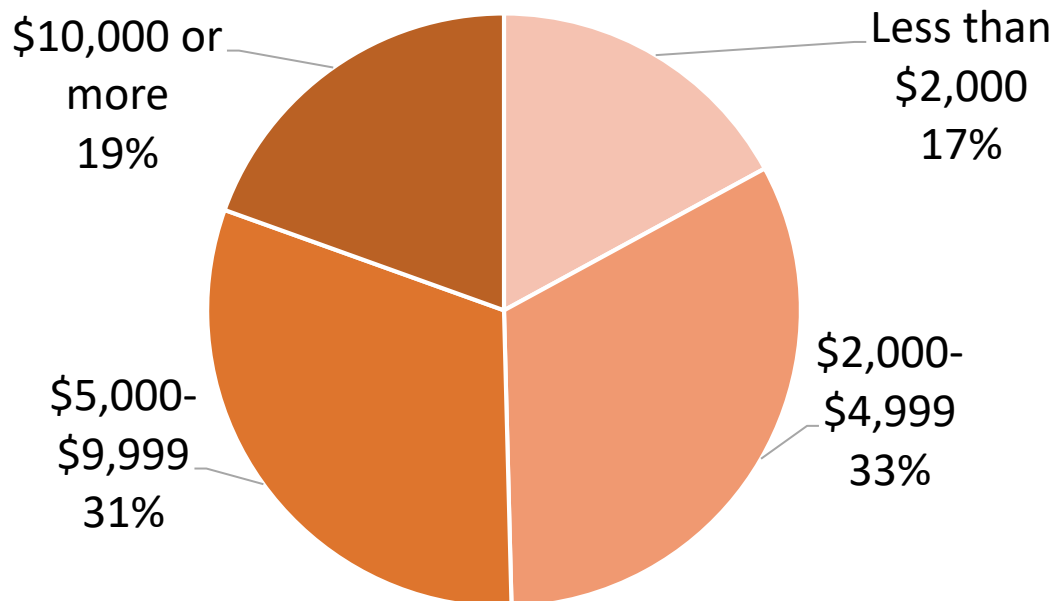


OFFICE OF THE CORRECTIONS OMBUDS

November 20, 2019

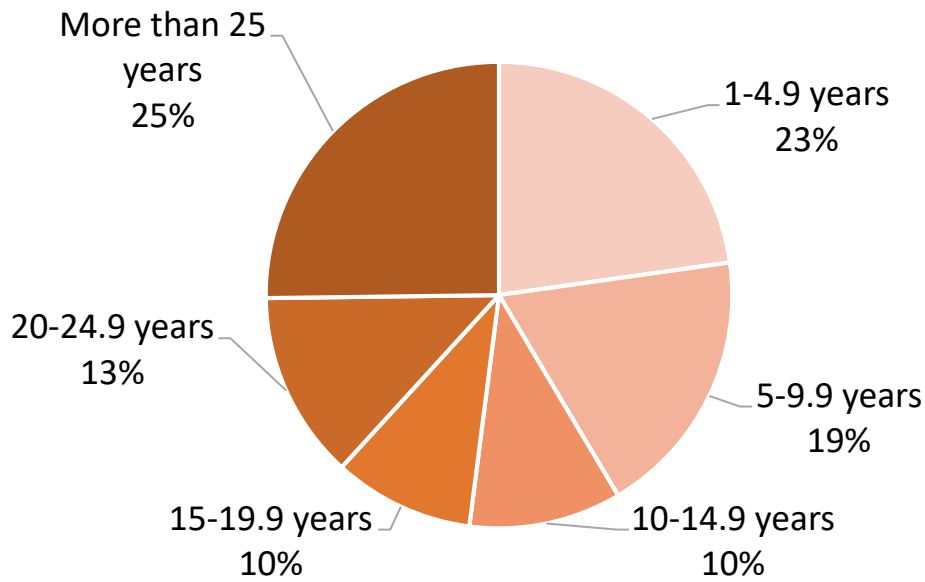
OCO conducted a brief informal survey that was sent out to family members of the incarcerated. In less than 36 hours, 123 responses were submitted. The responses included both quantitative and qualitative data.

Estimated Total Amount Spent Annually



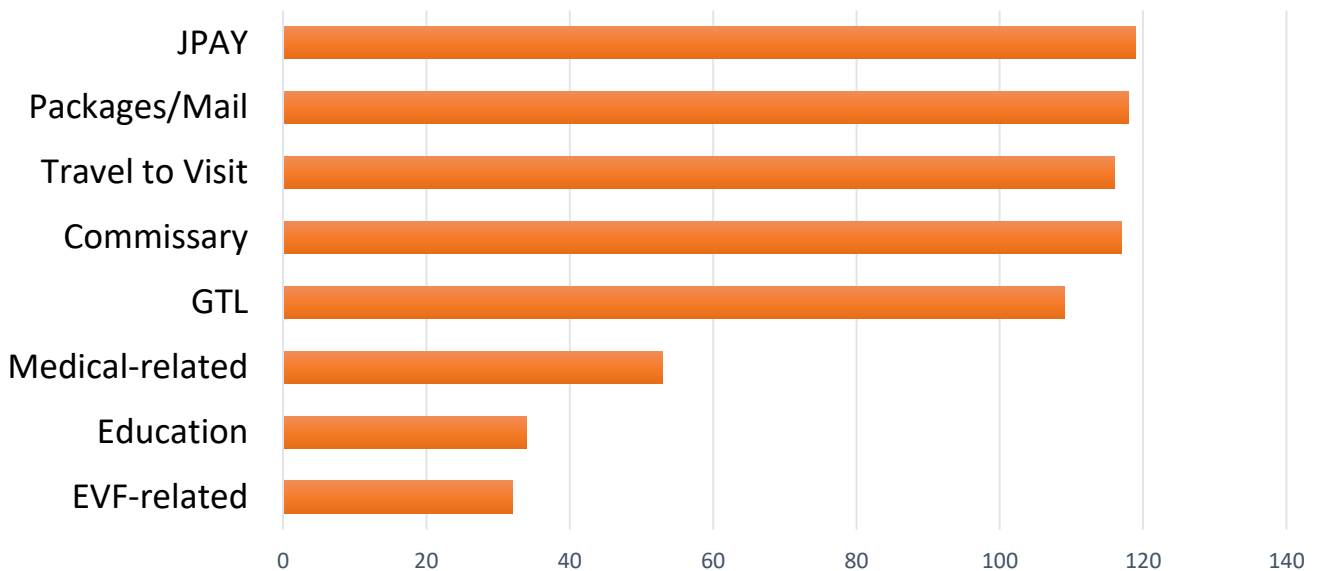
83% of respondents reported spending \$2,000 or more annually. The reported amounts ranged from \$150 to \$20,000. The one respondent reporting \$150 indicated that they wished they could spend more, but couldn't afford it.

Length of Sentence



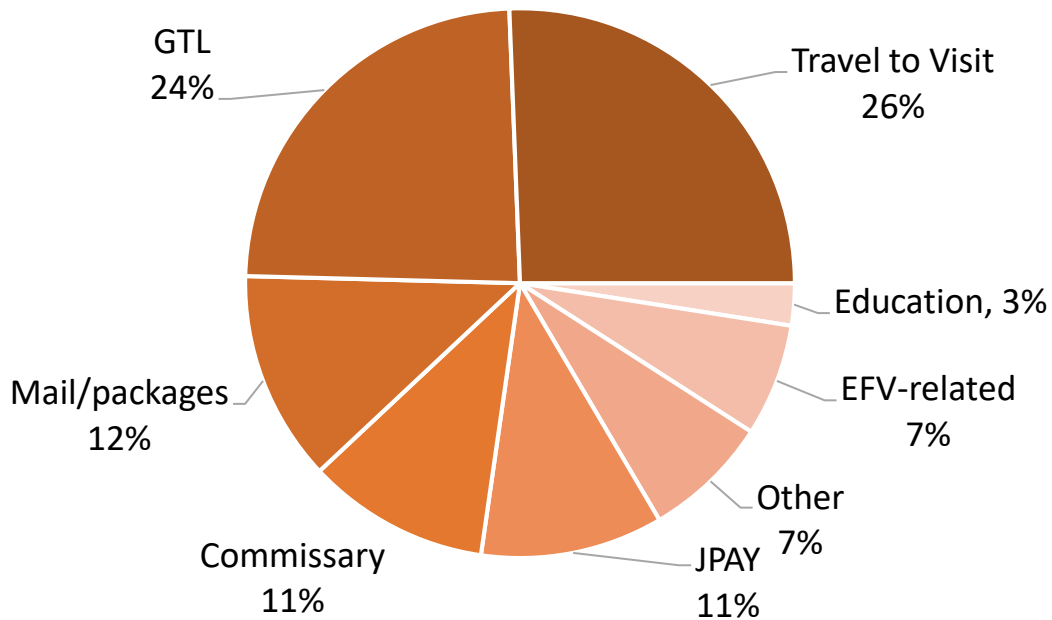
Approximately three-quarters of respondents could expect to spend this amount for five years or more.

Top Costs for Families



Top costs for families included communications (JPAY and GTL) with incarcerated loved ones, packages/mail, commissary, and costs related to visitation. Although only travel is listed above, a number of people added that food purchases at visitation through the vending machines were a major cost.

Highest Cost for Families



When asked to identify the single highest cost, approximately half identified either phones (GTL) or travel costs for visitation, with mail/packages, commissary, and emails/video visitations provided by JPAY not far behind.

How does Cost Impact Reentry?

- The cost I have is a sample, when I added it up what a surprise...I don't have it as bad as a wife with other kids to raise.. but to does take all the extra money you could of put away for when they return home,with him being down for 20 so far that's \$66,960..that could be a new beginning, that he won't have, what shame
- Impacts family budget
- With limited resources, half my income goes to supporting my loved one. Please.provide good food so they don't have to depend on packages to eat.
- The prison industry is a multi-billion-dollar industry that exploits the families as well. If the communication wasn't there then the incarcerated family members feel the impact because they do not feel supported therefore this could impact reentry.
- moved from back East, pay for GTL, pkgs, travel to visits, vending machines at visits, I have depleted all my \$'s, am in my 70's and now am at lost at how I can help financially when he is released. At his age how will he be able to take care of rent, food etc. I participate in both local & state family council's seeking answers for others & him.
- The system is set up for them to fail. Once released they have fines, fees and other charges, without help these charges are overwhelming. The cost of incarnation itself is staggering on loved ones. The system then hounds the recently released waiting for them to fail and thus keep the cycle going and going.

- A burden to families/loved ones who could be using the money to set aside for reentry expenses (housing, transportation to new job, etc), as well as inequitable to those that do not have support (emotionally upsetting , puts them farther from overcoming their struggles).
- Helping him to not be AS institutionalized - challenging him to make decisions on his own - help him to feel "at home" in relationships upon reentry - help him know there is an accountability system in his life - help him know he is not JUST a felon but an individual with real potential for successfully becoming an asset to society - help him know we need him as much as he may need us
- This is sometimes difficult for me
- I am not sure what you mean by this question. I believe that my participation in his life and my spending costs during his incarceration on basic necessities and gifts of love will positively impact his reentry. However, the more I spend now may mean less than I can spend to help him when he releases.
- I spend most on education. The way I see that it impacts reentry is that an incarcerated individual reentering society will have a specialty, a field in which he/she can pursue career but most importantly education keeps mind healthy, gives purpose and increases confidence during incarceration. Without all this, I'm not sure a person after years of incarceration can be in good mental state to reenter society and do well.
- I feel the financial hardship and burden of supporting a loved one through a period of incarceration is almost forced on families that want to remain connected. It also has impact on reentry by making it difficult to secure appropriate housing or a living situation that the offender can be released to. The expense of incarceration most often does not end once the offender is home. Excessive LFO's continue to impact family finances especially if the offender has difficulty finding adequate employment. This puts the family at risk for continued poverty. This also puts the offender at higher risk of recidivism for making poor choices or a return to incarceration for failing to pay LFO's. This leads to relationship strains with family and/or disintegration of the family unit. Stable secure family relationships encourage offenders to continue to move away from the negative effects of incarceration and embrace a better way of life for themselves and their families.
- With all these costs; LFO's, clothing, driver license fees, re-establishment into community, etc. this is a huge expense and if you don't plan or have the means to help out, this could result in unnecessary stress and issues that land them back in the system. This does not help with recidivism at all, in fact, probably one of the main reasons for going back in.
- It is vital to remain in CONSTANT contact with my son. This means regular phone calls, emails, photos shared and travel to visit in person. Our travel is 6 hours one way, with a ferry ride (and cost) in the middle. Quarterly packages run 200+ each. We also fund college correspondence courses to the tune of 800+ each.
- "Most of my time and money is spent advocating for my loved one and others in prison because the prison system is not safe, trauma informed or focused on individual case management or successful reentry people are treated as numbers and beds and the dignity and privacy of each person is not protected. Legal access in a prison is tremendously difficult and costly and requires outside help to navigate.
- Reentry is impacted when people don't have access to appropriate medical, mental health , domestic violence and substance abuse treatment; education; Job training, meaningful employment; adequate income; family, their children, and community; attorneys, legislators; and what it takes to repair harm, heal , and change. "

- It's frustrating to support your loved one and still be charged fees for everything on top of the cost to stay in touch. If reducing recidivism is so important, why do family get charged for our efforts?
- Because of a long sentence for my loved one, this is hard to say.
- It severs relationships so that incarcerated individuals have fewer connections when they return home.
- Earning a post secondary degree while incarcerated has the greatest positive impact on reentry
- Spending so much money while he is in prison takes away from savings for when he gets home. My son has been Incarcerated for 23 years with two more left to serve. I had a great savings account when I retired from working but that money has dwindled with the costs of incarceration.
- There is never any real ability to build the relationship connections we need to prepare for reentry. It feels like at every chance, the role of the DOC is to say they support family connection, but then do everything to thwart this.
- As a single mother, the cost of having another full-time person in the house will not really be offset by the money I don't spend on JPay, packages, etc. The money that I spend for EFVs is usually more than \$100/mo. and that is on top of the other expenses that I pay for.
- It is imperative to all of our incarcerated loved ones that contact, such as visits plus food bought, phone calls, videos and chats etc., be maintained throughout incarcerations. These interactions with loved ones will enable much better support and adjustment when reentry occurs.
- Such a difficult situation to try and explain. Because I choose to support my husband, I sacrifice in all other areas of my life. I have to choose to spend money on phone calls rather than buying myself clothes or saving for the future. I want my husband to be successful when he comes home, we have 3 years left. I need to purchase a home, with the housing market in Spokane I will likely lose my apartment if I move my husband in, because he has a felony. In order to purchase a house I am taking a second job, I cannot afford to live, support my husband, and prepare for our future. If he is going to be successful he needs me to help overcome obstacles. Having a husband who is incarcerated has so many challenges I never imagined, the financial hardship that comes with it is real. If he has stable housing he has a greater chance of making it. So there will be more sacrifices on my part, in order to provide him with every possibility for success.
- Limits ability to save so your loved one will have what they need upon release
- The extraordinary cost to our family to give our loved one edible food, the very basics of personal care items and the ability to communicate and stay connected to their people stops us from having those funds available to help them restart their life when they leave prison. We could have saved enough to provide a deposit on a place to live, buy all the items needed to live independently like furniture, food, household items.it could have provided funds for transportation to and from work or school. Paid for schooling. Bought needed clothing shoes and outerwear. Helped pay for neglected medical and dental care.
- My son was released recently he is expected to pay \$475 intake fee but has not been approved to start working yet He has to pay LFO's, Intake Fees, Rent, cost of Food etc. The costs must be covered the family. What would a person without this support do.
- Makes big difference to be able to put that money back into the household instead of all the DOC costs while incarcerated.

- Don't know how that is relevant
- I don't see a direct correlation between reentry and these expenses. Except perhaps that since we are subsidizing so much of the cost of incarceration, DOC should have more money to allocate to work release and reentry. Including community corrections. That side of the process is a terrible revolving door of failure that isn't captured in DOC's recidivism data.
- Many people can't afford what I can, so the relationships come to an end. Not much contact, calls, letters, etc. So I know a lot of men in there can't build strong support relationships before their reentry. They don't feel connected to family. They hardly can make a reentry plan. It's hard to come home to a world where you haven't had much contact.
- The cost I have is a sample, when I added it up what a surprise...I don't have it as bad as a wife with other kids to raise.. but to does take all the extra money you could of put away for when they return home,with him being down for 20 so far that's \$66,960..that could be a new beginning, that he won't have, what shame
- I think the prices are all too high. I think it makes Reentry very difficult. Not only are we struggling to make it. Our loved ones are as well. And will be when the get out of prison
- Terribly, by building resentment toward incarcerated partner over financial burdens and by leaving no money to serve as reentry funds if he comes home.
- The cost of incarceration that families have to take on results in living paycheck to paycheck and it makes it very difficult to save money and be prepared for reentry. There are fees for every transaction with GTL and JPAY added on to the amount that you have to pay just to be able to communicate with your loved one. When you have children it is especially difficult because you want them to have as many opportunities as possible to be able to interact with their incarcerated parent. Family involvement through phone, visiting and especially EFV are so important to building a firm foundation for incarcerated individuals both serving their time and preparing for reentry. I am thankful that I have been able to make it work financially but there are a lot of families that are not in the same position as I am. They are not able to see their loved ones as often resulting in stressed relationships which in turn results in a situation where people are releasing into an unhealthy situation whether it be financial or an unhealthy relationship. Thank you for taking the time to address this issue. It has a very real impact on families and incarcerated individuals.
- The amount of money spent during incarceration negatively impacts families and the individuals who are incarcerated. Instead of being able to save money for when someone returns home we are forced to spend money just to remain in contact. This also hurts individuals who do not have loved ones who can afford it- these leads to people not having family support or loving relationships which greatly increases their success when leaving prison. It is also impacts re-entry because we could have spent money on educational programs or correspondence classes but are unable due to the high cost of everything else. I would argue the high cost to families leads to higher rates of poverty and crime as well as continues cycles off poverty and crime. It is not right and it is harmful and hurtful to the individuals and communities who suffer the most. Please change this.
- I had to get a 2nd job to support my husband
- I don't believe DOC believes in rehabilitating therefore all costs will be on me
- I know that my loved one feels like he will be so deeply in debt when he gets out that he will never recover. Knowing that it will be harder to secure the caliber of employment needed already has him feeling hopeless.

- So much money is spent during incarceration that there is not a savings that needs to be there upon release.
- The fees are astronomical on all of the mentioned costs causing less money being used to pay off debt or other bills in my personal life or setting aside for when my husband comes home. I often have to choose between talking on the phone with him or visiting or him getting some commissary because the food situation is beyond disgusting or unhealthy, leading to less contact setting him/us up for success in his coming home.
- Garnishing wages that the family gives to a loved one only hurts the family. Families are going into debt which causes unnecessary stress. Upon release individuals have to go to work immediately just to help get out of debt.
- The cost enables him to keep in touch (JPay) and will facilitate his reentry. We are fortunate enough to bear this cost, and I am grateful for that. However, I am concerned about families with a very tight budget who cannot participate as fully as they are able.
- As our son was in prison for 22 months, was released and in 10 months was back in jail and then to prison for another 24 months; all together in the last five years he was in prison for most of 46 months. The first time he was released with no systemic support--no parole, halfway house, treatment; it was a disaster. The cost to us after his release, the first time was about \$8,000. The second time he was released there was systemic support. So far, he has been able to hold a job, get to his appointments, receive medical assistance, mental health and addiction treatment, and is again living as a responsible citizen.
- If we could save this money for their re-entry that would be ideal! The heavy costs also impacts re-entry because families that can't afford it lose closeness with their loved ones and that negatively impacts their transition home.
- I don't understand how the monthly costs effect reentry other than our savings account, since it is almost like a second mortgage payment to keep in close contact and engaged in your loved ones life. It would impact your reentry tremendously if your family is not able to afford this and loses ties and daily contact with loved ones.
- It the worst we pay so much for the worst ever services.
- I cannot even afford to purchase clothing for my husband once he is released because of the cost of phone calls. Other than my mortgage, my gtl Bill is my highest yearly cost.
- It is difficult for felons to find housing and employment. Family member(s) bear the cost while they are incarcerated. Then comes all the expenses with reentry. Replacing identification, fees for court-ordered rehab, monthly re-payment of court costs and judgments, transportation to get all of these things done, housing, clothing, etc. These costs end up getting charged on credit cards, loans from family, etc. The stress of the financial burden on the prisoner and their family is enough to tear them apart. After sacrificing so much during their prison term - the struggle continues on reentry.
- Afraid of not able to keep up home for him to return to.
- Families spend so much to support and stay connected to their loved ones that supporting them thru reentry becomes one more cost on an already burdened family. Or the cost makes it hard or impossible to stay connected and our loved ones lose that support system before they ever reach reentry.
- I will leave this at our legislature should permit some tax write off when a wife has to file. Because the return is less for a 6married woman filing single than a single woman. Even though the husband is a ward of the state.

- Its very important to support my daughter, that support has an expensive price tag. Her reentry will be that much smoother with the monthly /weekly calls,foods,visits,amazon orders, i care packages. These things make her morale better,her life as an inmate more tolerable.
- I feel it is important to keep and maintain contact with our incarcerated loved ones. Visitation, which includes EFV's, has been important to keep up moral for family members who are visiting and those being visited. The cost incurred is an investment in keeping our loved ones in contact with family and keeping up moral for all of us involved. I am glad there are so many opportunities to communicate and keep in touch.
- Medical neglect is a huge barrier to reentry. Accrued interest on LFO's is a huge barrier. Punitive treatment of prisoners & families is a huge barrier. No job or skills are a huge barrier. Little education and decent programming is a huge barrier.
- His health & dental problems are not being taken care of at all--so, will he ever get to reentry?
- We are just starting to look forward to our son completing his term of incarceration in 2023. It is difficult to plan anything that far in advance due the way the economy has been for the last several years, but I imagine that the Cost of Living will have increased by then, so we had better plan on almost double from what it costs us at this time.
- Not enough funds to fund legal representation and education
- Families unable to visit because of transportation or unable to talk with loved one due to cost lead to feelings of hopelessness and abandonment. The usurious fees charged by GTL and the practice of confiscating unused funds after 3 months lead to the feeling of individuals preyed on by GTL and the complicit state legislature.
- Visits one to two times a week spending money on baby/toddler items to bring in unopened, cost of vending to makeup for inadequate CI food and to make visit worth while. Cost per visit in good alone up to \$60 for 3.
- With everything we spend other things always come up. Most people don't know how much it really costs to have someone incarcerated. With them home it decreases wh as t you spend. So you can take care of things at home for family and nd not just that one person.
- Honestly, this system has broken our family. We will have no money to help after release. The system has tapped us out. Why does it have to be this way?? There is never enough food for them to have decent meals and if we out more than \$10 on his books., you guys take like 65%. Families are paying for this. The other services are beyond ridiculous price wise. Everything costs us money and frankly, the service we receive is beyond sub par.
- Very expensive to travel, pay for commissary, gas etc
- Its takes alot of money away from other aras, saving, house, car ect to make a better life for them when they get out.
- We were fortunate that the money we spent didn't impact his reentry. It was very important that we stayed connected and he had communication with his family. But other guys don't have the financial or the support of families to keep them busy or have projects to do I feel that the longer he stayed there more was taken away from him. Also getting supplies in to do projects was getting financially more expensive for the families. No wonder people were getting unhappy they weren't kept busy and you made it harder on them to try to get supplies from the family example woodshop Tools would disappear so the inmates couldn't do their projects going to church had very little supplies to do things for the community classes that were promised didn't happen I guess I could keep going on and on. So on the last note send in

books and magazines were rejected when I got the names Of vendors from your book to order magazines and then to find out he couldn't have them communication would've been great. And the food is terrible.

- This literally leaves me broke, I wont have any money at all to help with reentry- housing, transportation, fines, fees etc till he can get a job with the added difficulty obtaining work with a felony record, no training, no transportation system, no housing help, no shelter, dental work needed, no resources- small town.
- My childs incarceration is affecting family out trying to keep things afloat. It is very hard financially on parents and grandparents in our family. He'll be lucky if there is a family home to return to
- Trying to be supportive of someone who cant help themselves ,cost us our selves.. hes been placed far from family and part of reentry is to build fix and maintain relations w those u have caused damage too and heal together. Healing starts from mending those damaged fences and acceptance of what harm has been done to those who love the one who was sent to repair themselves
- We want to give our loved one the best chance when they are home. It is difficult to save money when we have to spend so much. Especially the FEES that are associated with all of these.
- It's been hard to support him financially, but I feel that my sacrifice to support him will help him psychologically, emotionally and physically by providing support, education and my commitment to his success.
- I will not have enough money saved to help him transition when he gets out. He will need all new clothes as he has outgrown all of the old ones etc. If I didn't have to pay as much I could save up for him. It is also difficult as doc takes such a high percentage of what I give him so I have to pay more so he gets the amount he needs. They take approximately 90%
- In order to support my husband, I have less money to set up a safe home for myself and our children, making us less likely to be certified for him to be released to us. Secondly, due to high costs, I cannot afford to visit as often, causing significant impact to his mood, our marriage, and his relationship with his children. Thirdly, if I cannot pay for his education, he is less prepared to reenter the work force as a contributing member of society. The cost of commissary restricted his access to somewhat healthy food (healthier than the cafeteria), and puts his mind and body at risk for fatigue and illness, making him less able to participate effectively in activities that set him up to better himself for reentry.
- I believe this is a huge hit to our family. I would rather be saving this for her when she gets home. The fees for many of these are exorbitant!
- I don't understand what my costs have to do with inmate reentry.
- Tremendously
- The cost is obscene. With all the money spent driving 5-7 hours one way- I could have already bought a house for is reentry. We asked that he stay on the west side of the state- but nope.
- Without sufficient support it is near impossible to have the money, resources and knowledge that these women need to just make do let alone be successful and that is without the added burden of drugs or alcoholi they must have support and resources they need to be successful.
- When my LO is released he will need to have a place to live and find work. It takes money for both, live with me or find a place? Has already asked for help, rent (assuming someone will rent to him), needs clothes and since we have no public transport he will need a car. With all the

money I spend throughout the year its impossible to save. Its hard to keep my bills paid too. I've seen the food at visits so I spend a lot for pkgs and his commissary so he can buy from store.

- Causes stress levels to increase and money could be put to better use.
- I don't visit as often as I should because of then distance and cost. When I purchase packages so that he has enough to eat there is nothing but junk, nothing nutritious. The cost of the junk is outrageous. I could purchase the junk for 1/4 of the cost outside. I am the only person he has left to talk with so I keep the line of communication open for him BUT the phone service is awful and we spend our 20 minutes repeating ourselves because we can't understand each other. Our system is broke. He has not had any rehabilitation in 7 years and won't have any until he is about to be released. How does that help?
- It will be a lot less expensive when he is home and if I could be saving all that money instead of spending it on all the fees I would have enough to take care of us once he is out and can get the medical attention he needs.
- Less money available for reentry.
- Cost of traveling to and from is the smallest concern, cost of hotels or finding a place to stay is astronomical. Traveling 3 1/2 hrs gas is roughly \$60 round trip, hotel is \$130 a night, \$40 a day for my loved one to eat, plus food for ourselves a weekend once a month roughly costs \$400. We often find places to stay so on a good month \$140. We do anything to save money because it is so expensive. EFV's are normally \$400 for food and items that have to be new. For instance shampoo, lotion, plastic baggies, it all adds up quite quick. The impact of costs make it impossible to save money for when they do get out. Hard to schedule for the year in advance because EFV's can only be scheduled one at a time. Some months have a higher influx of costs due to fundraisers, packages, unexpected illness. Many preventable scenarios, like having access to cough drops, cold medicine, soup and tea would prevent the common cold from spreading. Everyday things we take advantage of are not readily available that could reduce more serious issues. Other impacts are days taken off to visit that also reduce the \$ coming in, and puts families at risk of losing out jobs to accommodate schedules. Costs of incarceration puts financial stress on relationships and makes it difficult for our loved ones to be self sufficient. Their potential income is so limited that it's impact is minimal in comparison to the work we do outside of the prison walls. If we do move to be closer we risk losing our own financial, emotional and spiritual support system. We had money for a decent lawyer to remove most LFO's so when Reentry occurs our cost will be minimal but finding a place to live will be near impossible due to having a record and being out of work for over 8 years. Of the money being taken little is set aside for incarcerated and no investment is occurring, with the number of people putting in I would think it would be in everyone's best interest to give them a decent start when they do release by investing in something that will help them, and bring them the most benefit
- I believe this impacts the families of our loved ones because it makes it harder for us out here trying to pay our bills and trying to save money got when put loved ones come home. We pay taxes when we work, we pay for our loved ones food, postage, medical and phone calls which are all alot higher priced then they would be outside the prison walls. I feel like the loved ones on the outside of the prison walls are being punished just as much if not more then our lived ones inside the prison walls. This is not okay and things need to change. For instance you put money on your loved ones books... you get a fee charged to you to do that and then our loved ones get their money charged for all the different prison stuff... it's crazy and not okay!!!
- It's seems impossible
- I am a single mom, raising our son on my own until his release in 2023 and have been doing it on my own since 2016 I spend 40 dollars in stamps every two days 75 on the phone every three

days and visit every month from one income, the communication I have with him is why he does his time so peacefully...make it more affordable so we can save money too!

- All the money I have to spend on phone, jpay, packages, commissary and putting money on his medical, I could be saving so we could be in a better place financially when he gets out. Which would make him way less likely to offend. Every time my husband has went to prison it was for trying to make money. I'm not agreeing with his choices but I'm also trying to make things financially right for when he gets out so he'll never feel like he has to do Anything that could land him back in prison. With the burden of being the only person handling the financial side of prison i.e.... Packages, Phone, Jpay, Medical, commissary, and visiting it is very hard to save money. I mean just to visit my husband I spend about \$125 a visit. \$70-75 for food and the rest for gas. It would be a lot easier if we, as families we're not penalized and charged so much to support our loved ones who are already paying the price for their actions.
- I would love to secure a home for our future but am unable to even think about saving because contact during the next 5 years will be crucial to his reentry
- I could be more supportive making his reentry more positive if I could afford it.
- I feel like we spend so much on communication because we dont get visits as I am 1500 miles away...it makes it hard to save money for when he returns home. Communication is so very important to someone doing 20+ years. They have to feel remembered and loved so it's worth the money for a mom like me raising 3 kids.
- The money I use per month especially on phone calls could be set aside into a savings account to help my loved one and I lived using the temporary gap it takes him to find employment etc. bills still be coming and food has to be bought etc when they get released too and it's one extra person to support. Our biggest issue is how expensive calls are compared to states like Illinois where's its a penny per minute. We have the cheapest stamps out of all the states JPay provide to BUT the issues and complaints with JPay itself are non stop and seem to never be resolved or only temporary. Also it would be nice to have travel assists like WSP has for families to who travel from long distances like I do of 350+ miles each way.
- I have had to sell my sons car and almost all his belongings so that he can try to be as comfortable as possible and so that he can keep communication with me and his sisters. When he comes home, he won't have a vehicle to go to work with or any of his belongings to make him feel a part of society again, that itself is going to be a huge struggle!
- I feel if prices weren't as high as they are it would be easier for me to put money aside so when my husband gets to come home it wouldn't be as stressful to make sure we have everything covered until he gets back on his feet.
- If families costs were lower they may be better able to save money to aid their family and their formerly incarcerated family member when released.
- Because of the high costs, it makes it nearly impossible to have funds set aside for a successful reentry. Those who are released from incarceration have a difficult time finding employment as it is so it would be helpful if we as families could save money and set aside to help with transition to the outside world as the previously incarcerated individual finds employment and means to support themselves. Also the high costs make it hard for struggling families to keep in contact with their incarcerated loved ones.
- Due to the loss of the income or SS of the inmate and the increased cost born by the spouse or family in providing services and keeping the lines of communication open, the resources available for reentry will be much less than ideal at the time of release. Housing will be difficult to maintain and possibly hard to find at a cost which can be met by the inmate and/or his family.

- Lack of savings to pay for community custody and required treatment programs
- I feel the high costs impacts reentry because you are unable to save money for their return home. There are other things they need to be successful such as stability, drivers license, vehicle, clothing, necessities etc. If it didn't cost as much throughout the prison stay I would be able to help make payments on child support and court fines. When he comes home he will be adjusting to being out, looking for work and working on relationships with family. When he finds work it is stressful to have half your paycheck taken for child support, license, tickets, court fines etc. We have been through this before and it leads them into a lifestyle where they do not feel like they are backed into a corner. If family is able to save money during their prison stay it would help the inmate be more successful and not return to prison and they would not have that burden to worry about past due child support, tickets, fines etc.
- Keeps budgeting tight, get by with minimal purchases and having constant thoughts over money stress. Harder to maintain a communicative long distance relationship when calls are cut short due to funds. Or even worse, paying for frequently occurring poor quality service. Overall adds to general stress and negativity associated with incarceration.