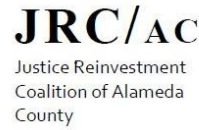




**Debt Free
Justice
California**



BerkeleyLaw
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Policy Advocacy Clinic



PRESS RELEASE

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ALAMEDA COUNTY ENDS ASSESSMENT OF AND DISCHARGES \$26 MILLION IN ADULT FEES

Newly-formed Debt Free Justice California coalition celebrates stunning victory as Board of Supervisors votes to make Alameda the nation’s second county to end wealth extraction through criminal justice fees and bring about “Debt-Free Justice” for communities.

Oakland, CA —On Tuesday, the Alameda County Board of Supervisors voted to put a permanent stop to the assessment and collection of fees imposed on individuals in the criminal justice system.

Following the lead of San Francisco County’s June 2018 decision and building on more than two years of advocacy on the part of EBCLC and our Debt Free Justice California coalition partners, Alameda County ceased the assessment and collection of fees for probation supervision, investigation reports, participation in the Sheriff’s Work Alternative Program, and many more fees that extract wealth from low-income communities of color. In past years, the average adult on probation in Alameda County has faced over \$6,000 in fees. The new policy, along with the discharge of existing debt, will go into effect on January 4, 2019.

The Board of Supervisors was influenced by a [white paper](#) released last month by the East Bay Community Law Center (EBCLC), which outlined how these fees inflict harm on low-income defendants by perpetuating poverty and creating additional barriers to employment, housing, and reentry. And because people of color are arrested and punished disproportionately, communities of color bear a much heavier burden of the costs.

Said Theresa Zhen, supervising attorney at EBCLC, “I’ve worked with far too many clients whose life savings were wiped out by criminal justice debt. Now, thousands of people in Alameda County can

focus on building a sustainable life for their families instead of constantly finding their wages garnished, their bank accounts levied, and their tax returns intercepted. It's been my honor to partner with impacted people to win this fight, and we applaud the Board of Supervisors for taking this courageous step forward."

"The elimination of these fees is a step toward ending the cycles of poverty and incarceration," said Eric Henderson, Policy Associate at the Ella Baker Center for Human Rights. "These fees impact families and low-income communities in ways that take generations to recover from."

According to Stephanie Campos-Bui, supervising attorney with the Policy Advocacy Clinic at Berkeley Law, "Research has shown that fees can undermine public safety by increasing recidivism. This move by the Board will free up money to pay for basic necessities like housing, food, and clothing, and help ensure that people exiting the system will have a better chance of successfully reentering into their communities."

Noe Gudiño, Policy Fellow at Legal Services for Prisoners with Children, said, "Ending court fines and fees will allow people directly impacted by the criminal justice system-- disproportionately low-income people of color--to invest more in themselves and their families, creating healthier and safer communities for all."

Added Brandon Greene, supervising attorney at EBCLC, "This is a huge, historic victory and one that we hope will build inertia for a statewide push. California has the opportunity to set the tone for the rest of the country. This is just one victory that is part of a much larger movement. Our partners in the Debt Free Justice California coalition are building power in local communities that we are confident will translate into a more fair and equitable California!"

Debt Free Justice California (DFJC) is a statewide advocacy coalition chaired by EBCLC and driven by movement-building organizations of directly impacted people. DFJC coalition members plan to leverage this county-level achievement to bolster their fight for statewide criminal justice fees abolition.

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The [East Bay Community Law Center](#) is the largest provider of free legal services in the East Bay and trains future attorneys to be skilled and principled advocates committed to finding innovative solutions to the causes and conditions of poverty.

The [Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](#) works locally, statewide, and nationally to shift resources away from prisons and punishment and towards opportunities that make our communities safe, healthy, and strong.

The [Justice Reinvestment Coalition](#) is committed to creating a fair and just public safety system based on effective practices that invest in our communities, our families, and our people.

[Legal Services for Prisoners with Children/All of Us Or None](#) organizes communities impacted by the criminal justice system and advocates to release incarcerated people, to restore human and civil rights and to reunify families and communities.

[The Policy Advocacy Clinic](#) at UC Berkeley School of Law trains law and public policy students to pursue non-litigation strategies to address systemic racial, economic, and social injustice.