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East Bay Community Law Center attorneys, law students, and community partners advance legislation to end criminal justice fees in Alameda County

Wednesday, September 12, 2018: OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: Tomorrow, the Alameda County Probation Department, Public Defenders Office, and the Sheriff's Office will testify in front of the Public Protection Committee to urge the adoption of legislation that will eliminate criminal justice administration fees in Alameda County. The East Bay Community Law Center, a legal services provider serving low-income residents in Alameda County, along with the Policy Advocacy Clinic of U.C. Berkeley Law School, Justice Reinvestment Coalition of Alameda County, Ella Baker Center for Human Rights and the Urban Strategies Council, have been actively advocating for the elimination of these fees.

The Probation Department, Public Defenders Office, and the Sheriff's Office assess insurmountable fees on people convicted of criminal offenses. For example, today, in Alameda County, defendants are charged monthly probation supervision fees of up to \$90 per month and pre-charge investigation report costs of \$710. Considering the context of other economic wealth-stripping mechanisms embedded in the criminal justice system, criminal justice fees in Alameda County are causing high pain for families and low gain for local county government.

"This is not only a fiscal and good governance issue but also a racial justice issue. Black folks, particularly Oakland residents suffer from disproportionate police contact, traffic stops, incarceration and all of the life altering collateral consequences that follow. In addition, Black folks are overburdened by housing costs, lower than average wages and the disastrous impacts of gentrification. This confluence of issues results in the most marginalized communities being the ones most impacted by court ordered debt that they cannot afford to pay. We urge the Board of Supervisors to take the first step in rectifying this situation by eliminating these fines and fees," remarked Brandon Greene, staff attorney and clinical supervisor at the East Bay Community Law Center.

"It is time for Alameda County to end the unscrupulous wealth-stripping of low-income individuals and families. EBCLC has represented countless individuals who want a clean start but are unable to get out from underneath the pile of debt imposed by criminal justice administration fees. A repeal of



fees and discharge of outstanding debt would be an important step towards true debt free justice in Alameda County,” commented Theresa Zhen, staff attorney and clinical supervisor at the East Bay Community Law Center.

In 2016, Alameda County eliminated juvenile fees and fines, which led to the passage of a bill that made California the first state in the country to eliminate court fees and fines for juveniles. Hoping for a repeat of this trailblazing action, this current campaign would eliminate adult fines and fees in Alameda County. The East Bay Community Law Center plans to publish a white paper that digs deeper into how the current system exacts high pain for little gain, disproportionately affecting vulnerable communities. Additionally, the Law Center has convened a state-wide coalition to end adult criminal justice fees throughout California.

The Public Protection hearing will take place at the County Administration Building, 1221 Oak Street, Room 255, 2nd Floor, Oakland, CA 94612 from 10:00AM – 12:00PM. The agenda can be found [here](#).