

DFJC | Debt Free Justice California

Today we proudly announce the official launch of Debt Free Justice California (“DFJC”). We are a concerned group of legal advocates, policy experts, researchers, and- most importantly- movement-building organizations led by impacted people. Building on the recent momentum of local criminal justice reform efforts throughout California, this statewide coalition will put a stop to the unfair ways our criminal legal system drains wealth from vulnerable communities.

Through the strategic collaboration of our dozens of member organizations, DFJC aims to reduce the harm of the criminal legal system while also shrinking its reach. Our current focus is to eliminate the harmful administrative and other criminal justice fees placed on people who have served their sentence, entangling them in a spiral of debt and creating massive barriers as they strive to move forward with their lives.

Momentum is building for criminal fees reform. In 2016, California enacted legislation ending juvenile administrative fees statewide. In 2018, San Francisco repealed all county-authorized fees and waived over \$30 million in outstanding criminal justice debt owed by 21,000, mostly low-income, San Franciscans. In September 2018, the Alameda County Public Protection Committee recommended that the Board similarly eliminate all county-authorized criminal fees. Tomorrow, the full Board will vote for the first time for this proposal. Additionally, the County of Los Angeles eliminated its public defender registration fee in 2017.

Now is the time to think bigger, broader and more critically about how systems of oppression can and must be dismantled. What’s at stake is not simply a matter of good or bad fiscal policy, but a system of entrenched racism that leads to over-policing, over incarceration and the downstream impact of wealth extraction from already vulnerable communities. DFJC endeavors to not only seek solutions but to explicitly name the problems. Most importantly, we aim to contribute to the movement for fairness and equity through radical transformation and envisioning of what true justice looks like.

We hope that you will join us in our fight.

Debt Free Justice California

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DFJC is facilitated by East Bay Community Law Center (“EBCLC”) and ACLU of Southern California. We are steered by EBCLC, ACLU of Southern California, ACLU of Northern California, Homeboy Industries, SF Community Housing Partnership, Insight Center for Community Economic Development, SF Financial Justice Project, PolicyLink and A New Way of Life Reentry Project. We are powered by dozens of member organizations throughout California who are committed to criminal fees reform.