



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 8, 2019

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ALAMEDA COUNTY ADOPTS NEW STANDARDS REGARDING ABILITY TO PAY DETERMINATION

East Bay Community Law Center celebrates victory as Alameda County Courts vote to make changes to the current Ability to Pay Determination Process that will provide more people with access to reduce their burdensome traffic court fines and fees.

Oakland, CA- Alameda County Courts have agreed to implement some important changes in the Ability to Pay Determination Process. These changes will help indigent individuals navigate and successfully complete the process, giving them the ability to reduce the traffic-related fines and fees that they owe in Alameda County. East Bay Community Law Center (“EBCLC”) is pleased to announce that the following changes are being made after successful discussions with the CEO of Alameda County Courts:

1. County Courts will soon be accepting EBT (Food Stamps) and Medicaid Cards as proof of an individual’s inability to pay. This will make it significantly easier for indigent individuals to prove their inability to pay as many of them carry these cards with them, but do not carry the statement of benefits letters which were previously required. The past practice of requiring the statement of benefits letters often forced individuals to complete extra steps, such as contacting MediCal or the Department of Social Services to obtain these letters and then making additional trips to the courthouse. Accepting the cards instead is a practical and efficient solution for both individuals and the court.
2. Every Ability to Pay denial letter sent from Alameda County will include standard language about how to petition the Commissioner for further review. Previously this language was only included as an afterthought in some denial letters. This information will now be provided to everyone who receives a denial so they can access all avenues to reducing their fines and fees.

We are grateful to the Court for continuing to take our concerns seriously and for its efforts to continue to evaluate this program and whether or not it is serving to expand access for vulnerable communities.

We hope that with these positive changes more people will successfully be able to lower their fines and fees through the Ability to Pay Determination Process.