



MEDIA STATEMENT

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LOS ANGELES COUNTY ENDS ASSESSMENT OF AND DISCHARGES \$1.8 BILLION IN ADULT FEES

The Debt Free Justice California coalition commends the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for ending county-sanctioned racialized wealth extraction through criminal fees

Los Angeles, CA—On Tuesday, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors voted to end the assessment and collection of all discretionary fees collected and retained by the county. The new policy will go into effect immediately and the County will discharge \$1.8 billion in previously assessed fees.

Although not required by state law, Los Angeles County charged a range of fees, including fees for probation supervision and electronic monitoring, to people in the criminal system at some of the highest amounts in the state. For someone like Sandra Blanco, a native of South Central and Community Coalition member who was sentenced to three years on probation, the County charged her over \$5,500 in just supervision fees. Like the majority of people on probation in Los Angeles County who on average make less than \$20,000 per year, paying off these fees was an added unnecessary burden as she struggled to find steady work and return home to her family.

The Board of Supervisors was influenced by a 2019 [report](#) released by the Let's Get Free LA coalition, which outlines how these fees have inflicted harm on Black, Brown and low-income people by perpetuating poverty and creating additional barriers for people and their families. The report also illustrated the limited impact the fees have had for their stated purpose: while fees are intended to help counties recoup costs, the county collects less than 4% of fees.

Anthony Robles, an organizer with Youth Justice Coalition and co-author of the report, said, "The county has a responsibility to ensure all of its community members, no matter their income or experience, receive equal justice and a fair chance to succeed. I was charged for my representation by a public defender and couldn't pay the fee on time. So the County used a private collection agency to come after me which only added stress to an already incredibly stressful time in my life."

Due to overpolicing and racial bias in the system, the burden of fees is racially inequitable and also falls disproportionately on lower-income families. The Debt Free Justice California coalition

joins Let's Get Free LA in celebrating an end to this form of wealth extraction from communities of color.

According to Angelique Evans, a policy fellow for A New Way of Life and a Debt Free Justice California member, "After I was released from prison, Los Angeles County told me that I owed over \$3,000 in administrative fees, and billed me more than \$300 each month. I fortunately was able to pay off my fees and know firsthand what relief from this debt feels like. I look forward to continuing work at the state level so that all system-impacted people and their families can focus on rebuilding their lives."

Los Angeles County, which holds 1/4 of the state's population and the vast majority of the state's criminal system debt, is now the fourth county in California to end the assessment and collection of criminal fees. The Debt Free Justice California coalition is working with Senator Holly Mitchell on [Senate Bill 144](#) ("Families over Fees Act") which would end some of the most harmful fees across the state and discharge all previously assessed fees. Momentum across California is clearly building as local governments address this racial and economic justice issue. It's time for the state government to also take action.

In light of Los Angeles County's action, Senator Mitchell said, "I applaud the LA Board of Supervisors for recognizing fees are an inappropriate way to fund government programs and the burden of fees is like double jeopardy for families. I hope Governor Newsom recognizes this major action from the largest county in CA for what it is, a self-defeating anemic source of revenue and a financial burden to the lowest income families in the state. Eliminating criminal administrative fees is feasible and if LA can afford to do it, California can too."

Included in the [motion](#) is a directive to the Chief Executive Office to prepare a letter of support for SB 144 (Mitchell) signed by all five LA County Supervisors that will be sent to the Governor and legislative leaders.

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The **Let's Get Free LA** coalition fights for economic and racial justice for system-impacted people and families in Los Angeles County. The coalition is led by people who have experienced county jails, courts, and probation, as well as several organizations: A New Way of Life Reentry Project, the ACLU of Southern California, Anti-Recidivism Coalition, Community Coalition, Homeboy Industries, National Lawyers Guild-LA, Public Counsel, and Youth Justice Coalition.

Debt Free Justice California is a multi-regional California-based coalition focused on putting a stop to the unfair ways the criminal legal system drains wealth from vulnerable communities. The coalition is comprised of legal advocates, policy experts, and most importantly movement building organizations led by impacted people. For more information visit: <https://ebclc.org/cadebtjustice/about/>.