



CITIES & COUNTIES FOR **Fine and Fee Justice**

Bootcamp and Cohort 2

December 9, 2021

Website: policylink.org/ccffj

Today's Agenda

- Opening Remarks by SF Treasurer José Cisneros
- Overview of National Fine and Fee Reform Landscape
- Roundtable with CCFFJ Cohort 1 Team: St. Paul
- Introduction to CCFFJ Bootcamp and Cohort 2
- Questions and Answers (please use Q&A throughout the webinar)

National Fine and Fee Reform Landscape

What are Fines and Fees?

FINES: Monetary sanctions imposed as punishment for violating the law – either criminal or civil.

FEES: Costs, assessments, and surcharges imposed to access services or fund the justice system or other government services.



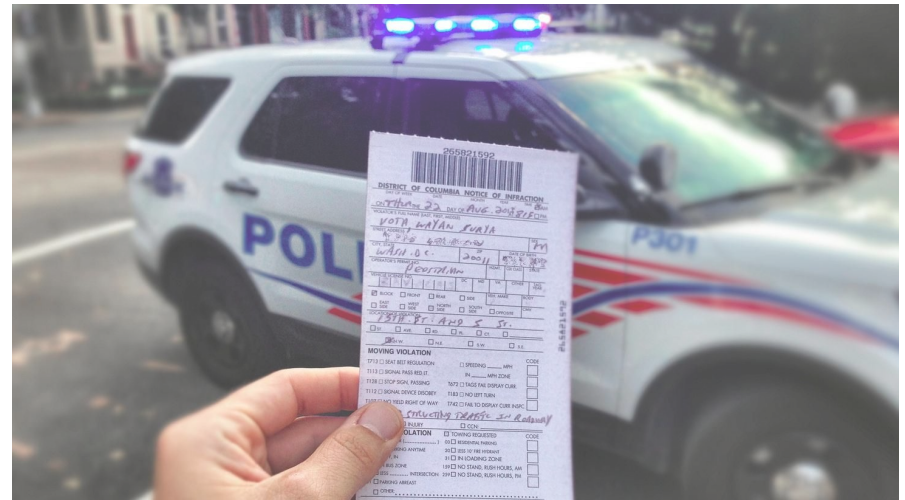
Consequences for Nonpayment

- More fines and fees
- Prolonged Justice Involvement
- Civil Judgments
- Driver's License Suspensions
- Loss of Voting Rights
- Warrants, Incarceration

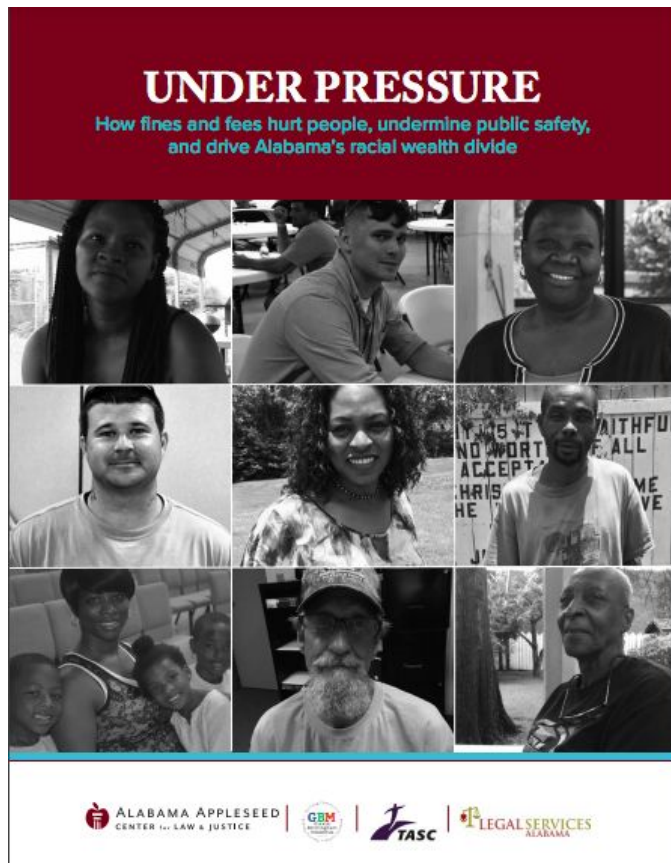


Fines and Fees are Causing Harm to Communities

- **Extracting wealth** from most vulnerable communities
- Adding to **tension** between communities and law enforcement
- Compounding **racial disparities** in the criminal legal system
- **Criminalizing** poverty



Individuals Take Extreme Measures to Pay Court Debt



2018 Alabama Appleseed Survey
(1,000+ responses):

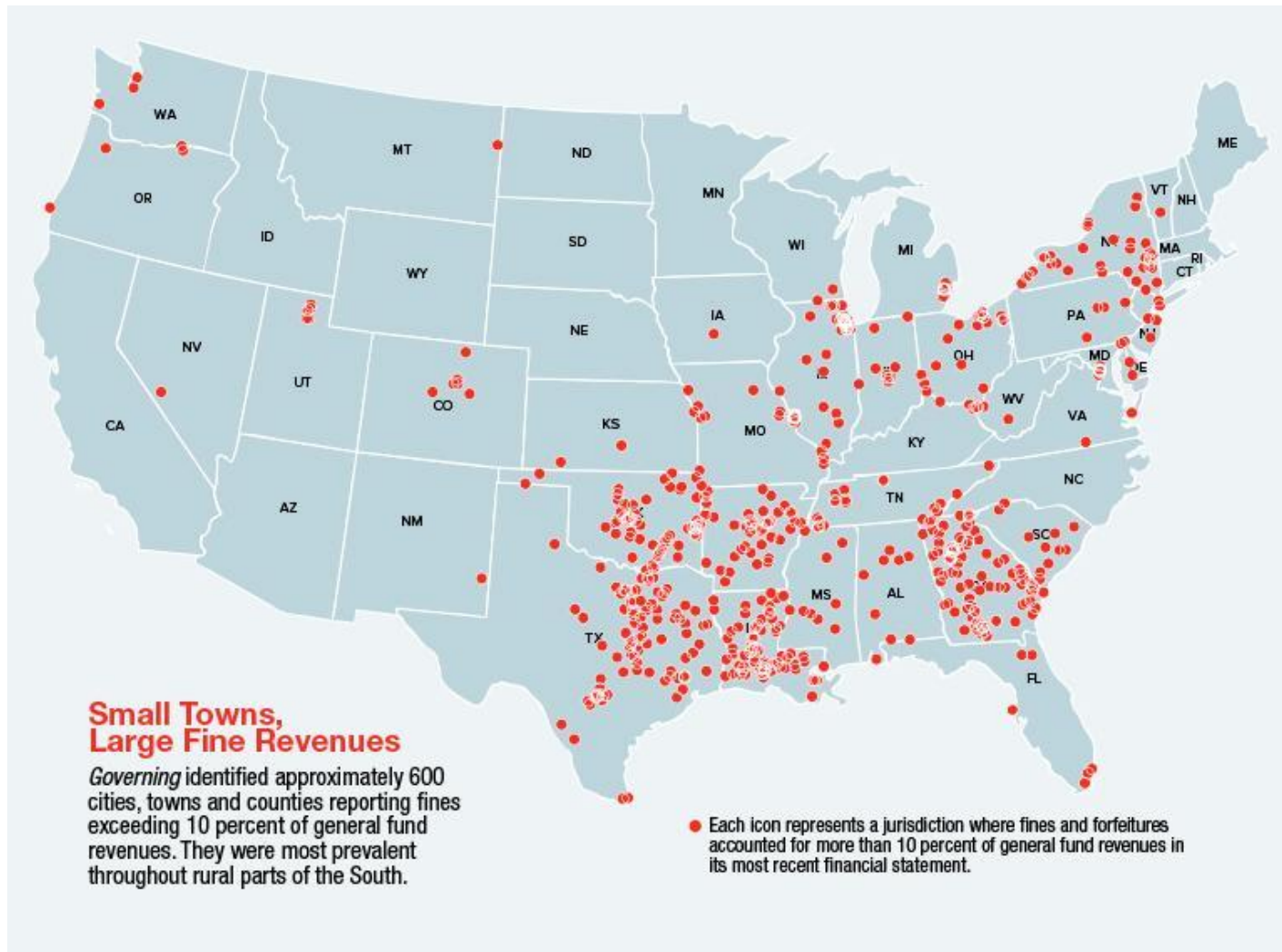
- More than 8 in 10 **gave up necessities**
- About 45 percent of those surveyed had **lost their licenses**
- Nearly half said they had been **jailed for failure to pay court debt**

Fines and Fees are a Bad Source of Revenue

- Inefficient, unstable and unsustainable
- Bloat the criminal legal system
- Bad public safety outcomes
- Exacerbate racial inequities



Localities Rely on Fines and Fees to Fill Budget Gaps



Source:
Governing
Magazine,
“Addicted to
Fines,” (2019).

What Can a City or County Do?

Bold Local Reforms that Advance Fine and Fee Justice:

- **Stop suspending driver's licenses** when a person cannot pay their traffic tickets or miss a court date
- Put people before profits! **Lower the high costs of incarceration**
- **End high-pain low-gain fees** charged to people in the criminal legal system
- **Reform fines** that exceed people's ability to pay or serve no compelling public policy purpose

Small Towns
Large Fine Revenues

Governing identified approximately 600 cities, towns and counties reporting fines exceeding 1 percent of general fund revenues. They were most prevalent throughout the South.

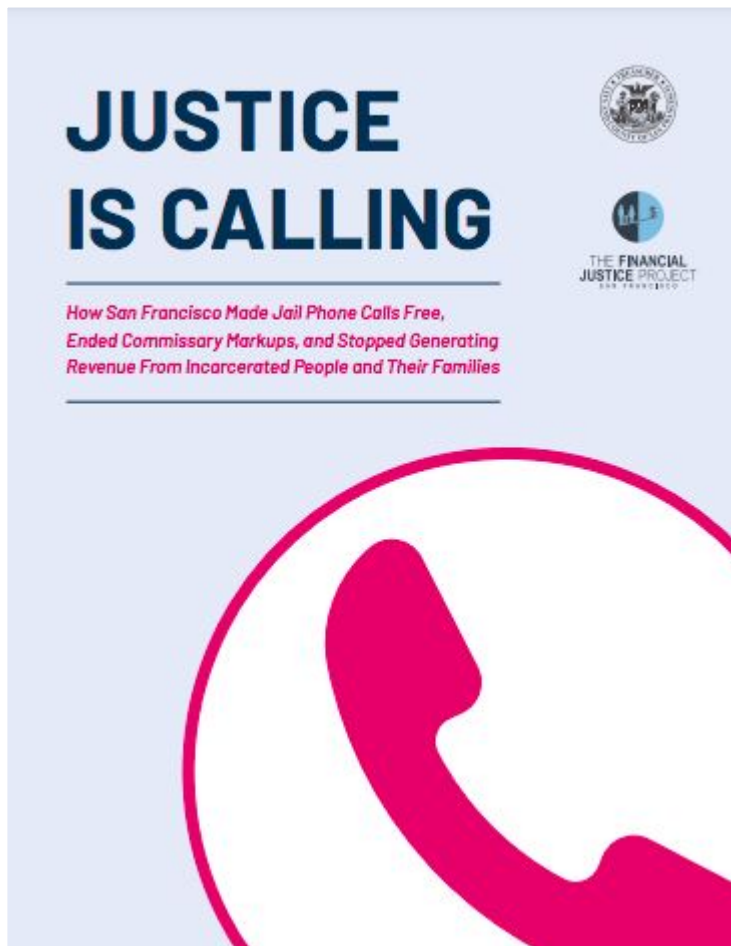
Whereas the fines and forfeitures accounted for more than 10 percent of general fund revenues in its most recent financial statement.

End Debt-Based Driving Restrictions that Penalize Poverty and Do Not Advance Public Safety

- **Durham's** DEAR Program
- **Dallas** ended Omnibase
- **Shelby Cnty, Baltimore, Davidson Cnty, Cook Cnty, and Suffolk Cnty** - prosecutors stopped charging for driving on a suspended license (when suspension was debt-related)



Put People Before Profits: Lower the High Cost of Incarceration



- **New York City** - first city to make jail phone calls free
- **San Francisco** - fixed-rate contract to provide free phone and video calls in jails and eliminated commissary mark-ups
- **Dallas** - reduced cost of jail phone calls to 1 cent per minute, forgoing County profits
- **Philadelphia** - 165 minutes of free phone calls/week and eliminated commissary mark-ups.

Eliminate “High Pain Low Gain” Fees in the Criminal Legal System

- **Buffalo, NY** - repealed 13 vehicle and traffic fees
- **Los Angeles County** - eliminated discretionary criminal admin fees and waived related debt
- **Ramsey County, MN** - eliminated 11 fees



Eliminate High Pain Fees for Youth

- **Dane County, WI** - eliminated fees and forgave \$1.4 million outstanding debt
- **Sacramento, CA** - repealed many juvenile fees, waived \$23.2 million in fee debt and prohibited collection of juvenile fees.



Rightsize Fines that Exceed People's Ability to Pay and Create Non-Monetary Alternatives

Towing and Booting: **SF's** SFMTA discounted towing fines and lowered boot fines for lower-income households



Decriminalization: **NYC** decriminalized possession of open alcohol containers and public urination

Quality of Life Citations: **SF's** CONNECT Program - individuals experiencing homelessness can clear Quality of Life citations if they receive 20 hours of social services assistance



CCFFJ Cohort 1 Panel : City of St. Paul

- **Mayor Melvin Carter**, City of St. Paul
- **Muneer Karcher-Ramos**, Director, Office of Financial Empowerment
- **Kevin Reese**, Co-founder and Co-CEO, Until We Are All Free
- **Anna Odegaard**, Director, Minnesota Asset Building Coalition

OVERVIEW

CCFFJ Bootcamp & Cohort 2

2022 CCFFJ Bootcamp

- **2-day convening on March 3-4, 2022 in Phoenix, Arizona**
 - ➔ Training on Roadmap to Equitable Fine and Fee Reform framework
 - ➔ Deep dives on bold reform issues that are gaining local and national momentum
 - ➔ Engage with fellow policymakers and advocates from across the country
 - ➔ Receive actionable tools and resources to advance reform
 - ➔ Learn about application criteria for the second CCFFJ cohort
 - ➔ Target Attendees: Local government and partners
 - ➔ Travel/accommodations provided for two representatives per location

Roadmap to Bold and Equitable Fine and Fee Reform

Build Your Team

- Consider team member capacity and authority
- Add community representation (if necessary)

Fine and Fee Assessment

- Engage community
- Engage and collect data from government stakeholders
- Examine authority
- Conduct budget/fiscal analysis

Develop Reform Plan

- Identify reform approach
- Consider key questions
- Conduct racial equity analysis
- Identify priority reforms

Enact/Implement Reform

- Message/frame effectively
- Work with impacted individuals to share their stories
- Engage media
- Enact reforms



Center the Voices and Perspectives of Impacted Individuals

Reform Policy Priorities



Administrative Fees in the Criminal Legal System

- End high-pain administrative fees charged to people in the criminal legal system.
- Eliminate fees, surcharges, penalties and interest that are piled on top of traffic tickets and drive up costs to unaffordable levels for people with low incomes.

Reform Policy Priorities



Drivers License Suspensions that penalize people for their poverty

- Stop suspending people's driver's licenses when they cannot pay their traffic tickets and/or miss a court date.
- Reinstatement driver's licenses suspended for those reasons.

Reform Policy Priorities



The high costs of incarceration

- Eliminate costs to incarcerated people and their families for phone calls.
- Eliminate profiteering off of purchases from the jail store/commissary and tablets.

Reform Policy Priorities



Fines that exceed people's ability to pay or serve no compelling policy purpose

- Eliminate fines that do not advance a key policy goal and create alternatives to fines where the goal can be achieved through other means.
- Fines should be proportionate to the offense, the person, and their circumstances.
- Right size fines that exceed the ability of people with low incomes to pay them.

CCFFJ Cohort 2 — July 2022 - August 2023

Benefits and Supports

- Personalized Technical Assistance
- Reform Implementation Planning
- Communications Strategy
- Shared Learning + Network Access
- Grant Funding

Next steps

- **Week of December 13:** Bootcamp Applications Open
- **January 16, 2022:** Bootcamp Applications Due
- **January 31, 2022:** Bootcamp Registrants Confirmed
- **March 3-4, 2022:** Bootcamp in Phoenix, AZ
- **April 1, 2022:** Cohort 2 Intent to Apply Forms Due
- **May 15, 2022:** Cohort 2 Applications Due
- **July 11, 2022:** Cohort 2 Start Date

A bronze statue of Lady Justice, blindfolded and holding scales of justice in her right hand and a sword in her left. In the foreground, a wooden gavel rests on a dark wooden block. The background is a blurred indoor setting with large windows.

Questions & Answers

More info at:

policylink.org/ccffj