



1785 NE Sandy Blvd #300  
Portland, OR 97232  
youthrightsjustice.org  
(503) 232-2540

February 1, 2021

To: House Committee On Judiciary House Subcommittee On Civil Law  
From: Amy Miller, Executive Director

**Re: Support for HB 2176: Eliminating mandatory payment plan fee**

Dear Chair Power, Vice-Chair Wallan, and Members of the Committee,

Youth, Rights & Justice is Oregon's only non-profit juvenile public defense firm. Every year, YRJ represents over 1200 children and parents in Oregon's juvenile court system. All of our clients come from low-income families. Most have suffered significant trauma and many have physical, mental health and/or substance abuse issues. Approximately 45% are children of color. Because of our unique position handling court-appointed juvenile cases, we often see the same systemic problems and we work to change the policies that contribute to these problems.

Juvenile justice system involvement creates consequences that can last a lifetime. Even after a youth has matured and has been rehabilitated, youth and their families may be burdened by fees incurred through participation in the system. Research shows that fees also undermine trust in the juvenile justice system, are correlated with increased recidivism, and can have adverse impacts on mental and emotional health.<sup>1</sup>

Fees are also racially discriminatory, falling more heavily on rural, Black, and Indigenous Oregonians who are overrepresented in the juvenile justice system as a whole.

Court collections fees are not designed to serve rehabilitative or community safety goals, and they are distinct from restitution assessed for victim compensation. Allowing the court to

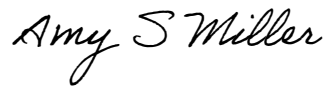
---

<sup>1</sup> JESSICA FEIERMAN ET AL., JUVENILE LAW CENTER, DEBTORS' PRISON FOR KIDS? THE HIGH COST OF FINES AND FEES IN THE JUVENILE SYSTEM (2016), <https://debtorsprison.jlc.org/documents/JLC-Debtors-Prison.pdf>. Alex R. Piquero & Wesley G. Jennings, Research Note, *Justice System-Imposed Financial Penalties Increase the Likelihood of Recidivism in a Sample of Adolescent Offenders*, 15 YOUTH VIOLENCE & JUV. JUST. 325 (2016), <https://debtorsprison.jlc.org/documents/JLC-Debtors-Prison-criminology-study-2016.pdf>. LESLIE PAIK & CHIARA PACKARD, IMPACT OF JUVENILE JUSTICE FINES AND FEES ON FAMILY LIFE: CASE STUDY IN DANE COUNTY, WI (2019), <https://debtorsprison.jlc.org/documents/JLC-Debtors-Prison-dane-county.pdf>.

refrain from ordering these burdensome and harmful fees is a small, but important, first step toward unspooling the financial burdens placed on youth, their families, and other litigants.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Amy S Miller". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Amy Miller  
Executive Director