

# THE FINANCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

S A N F R A N C I S C O

**Presentation to  
Policy Insights 2018**



# The Financial Justice Project

A first-in-the-nation  
countywide effort to alleviate  
the inequitable burden of  
financial penalties on struggling  
San Franciscans.



THE FINANCIAL  
JUSTICE PROJECT  
SAN FRANCISCO

## Top Lessons



Fines and fees are spreading when people can least afford them.



Steep fines and fees that are beyond people's ability to pay can dig people into financial holes



Steep fines and fees can be “high pain” and “low gain” and a lose-lose for citizens and government



Solutions exist that work for both government and citizens.

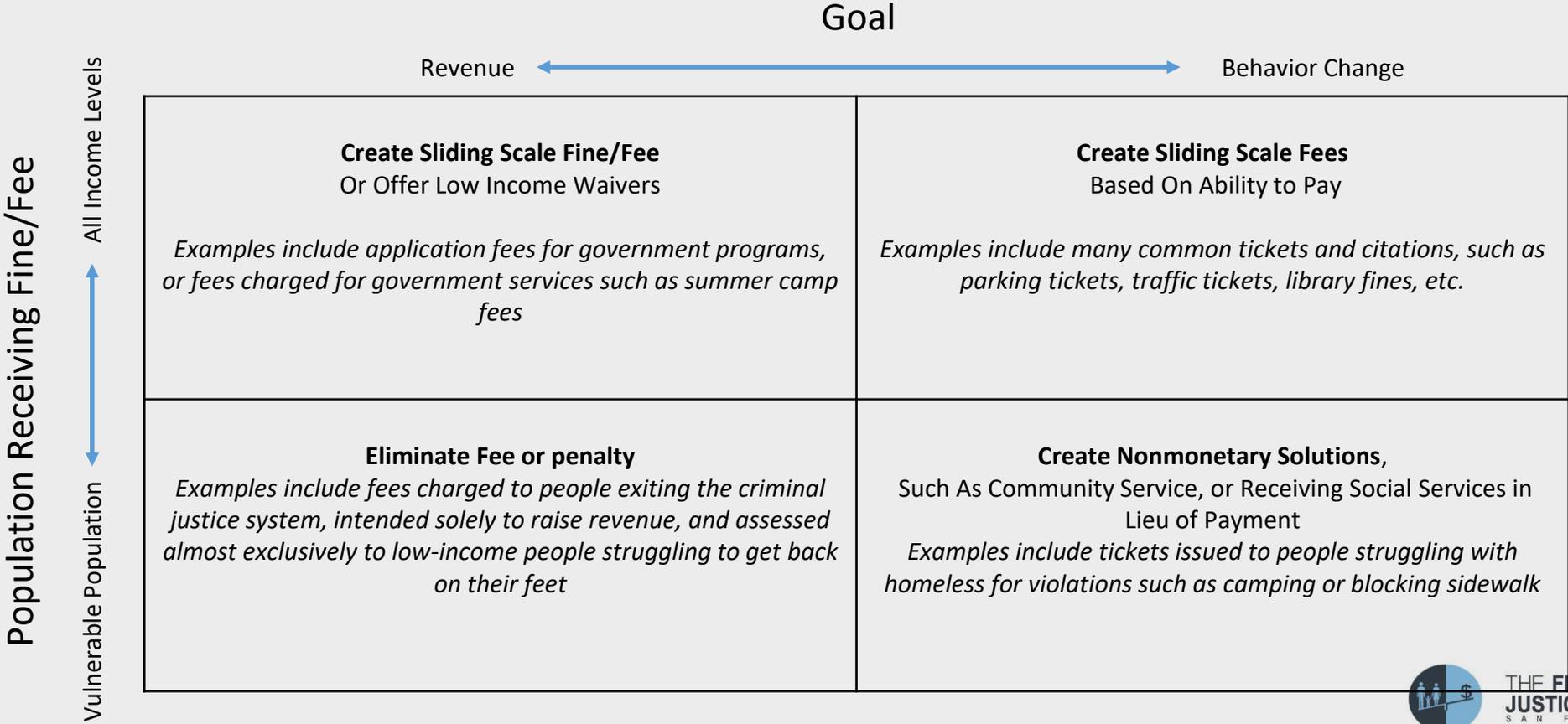
*The consequence should fit the offense, and not hit the poor or people of color harder.*

## Policy Areas for Reform



# Solutions

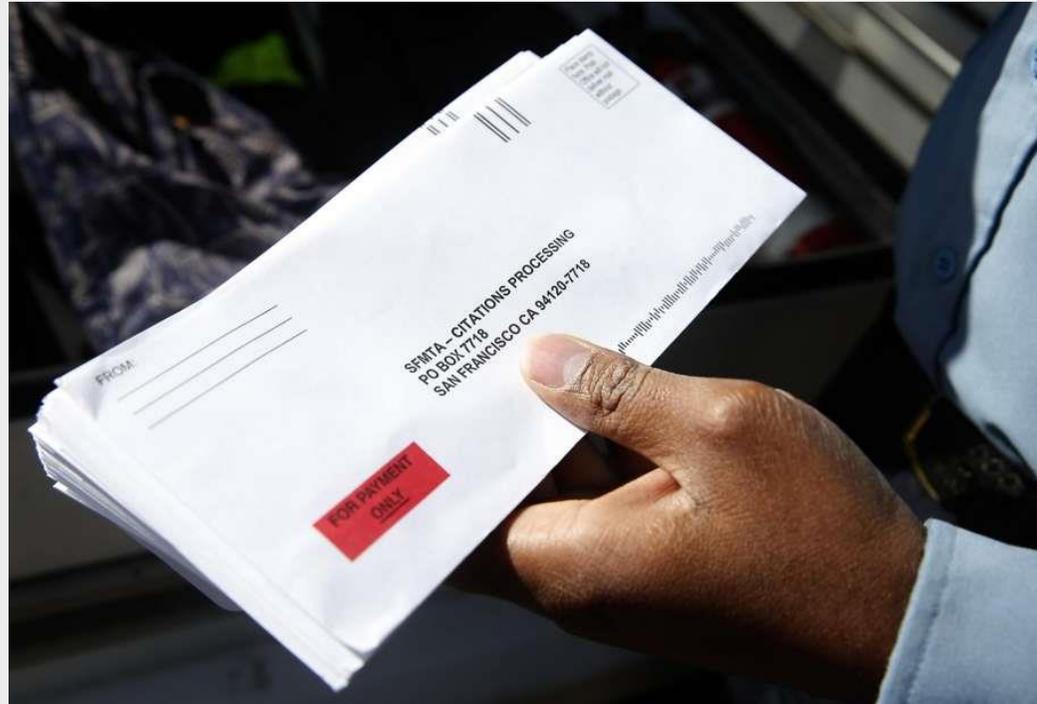
- 1.) What is the goal of the fine or fee?
- 2) Who receives these fines and fees?



# San Francisco Advances First in the Nation Legislation to Eliminate Criminal Justice Admin. Fees



# SF MTA cuts fees for low-income people to pay off tickets



# Nonmonetary Solutions

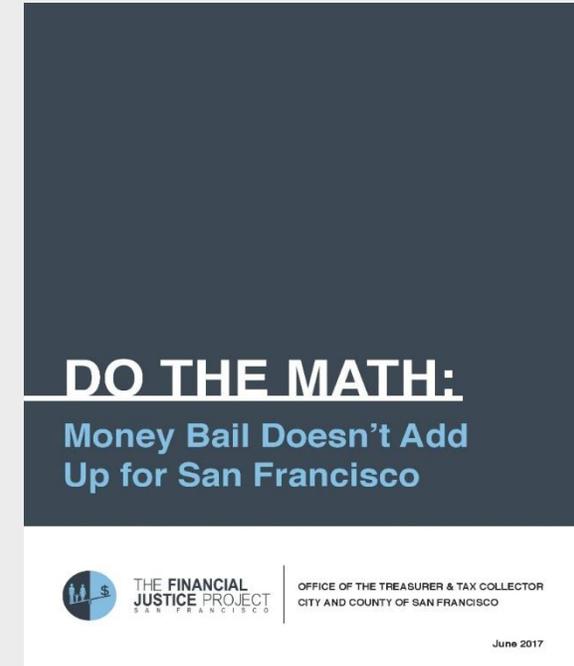
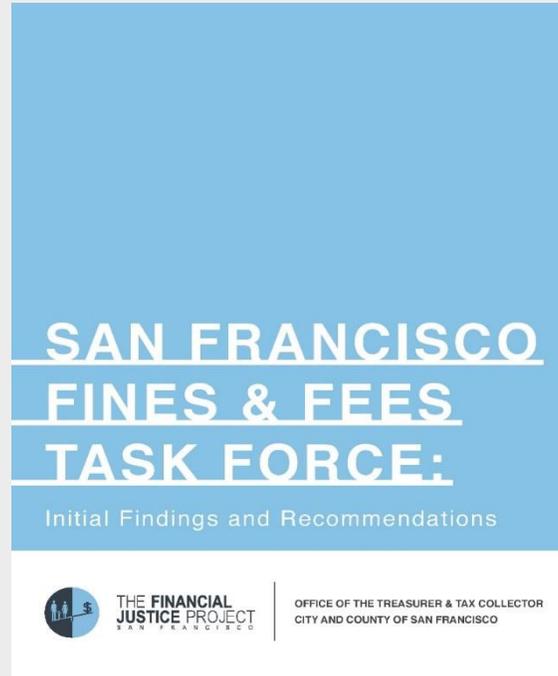
Community Service, or Receiving Social Services in Lieu of Payment



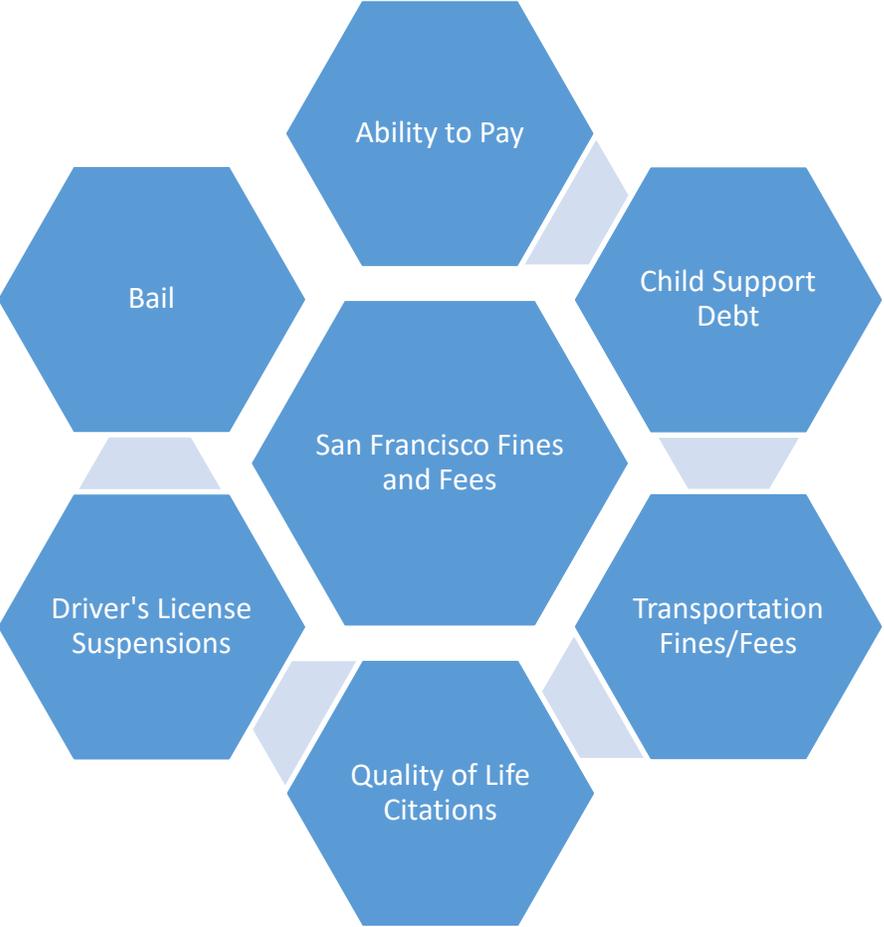
# Reports & Media Coverage

<http://sftreasurer.org/financialjustice>

 @FairFinesFees



# AREAS OF REFORM



# RECOMMENDATIONS

## ABILITY TO PAY



### GOAL:

When possible and appropriate, base fine and fee amounts on an individual's ability to pay, to ensure consequences do not place an inequitable burden on low income San Franciscans.

## DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSIONS



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### GOAL:

Remove employment barriers for low-income San Franciscans by ending the practice of suspending San Franciscans' licenses when they are unable to pay traffic citations.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## QUALITY OF LIFE CITATIONS



### GOAL:

Ensure that “Quality of Life” citations do not punish people for being poor or create barriers to employment and housing for people struggling with homelessness.

## TRANSPORTATION FINES AND FEES



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### **GOAL:**

To ensure consequences for transportation violations hold people accountable but do not pose an inequitable burden for low income San Franciscans.

## BAIL



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### GOAL:

Reform our local system of bail to ensure decisions to keep someone in jail are based on the risk they pose to the community, not the amount of money in their bank account. All local bail reform efforts must enhance public safety, increase accountability, and enhance justice, and equity.

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## CHILD SUPPORT DEBT



### GOAL:

Relieve the inequitable financial burden of child support debt owed to the government by low income parents when they cannot afford to pay.



## THE SACRAMENTO BEE

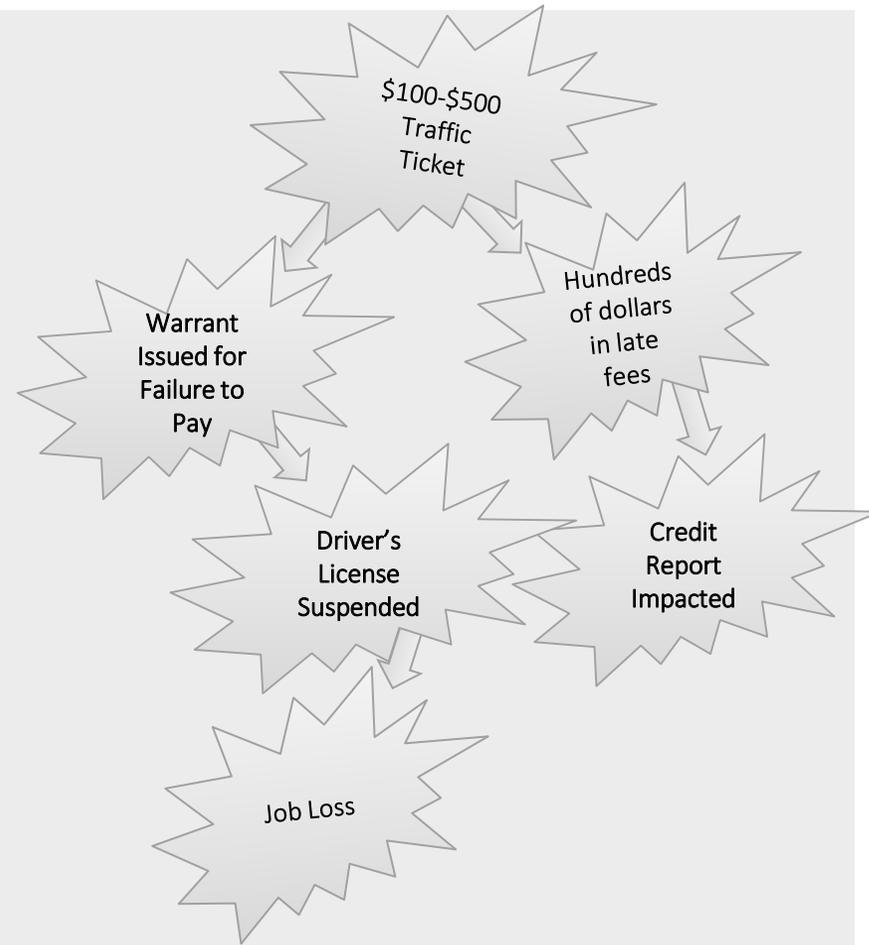


It's self-defeating to bill parents for their children's jail time

BY ANNE STUHLREHER

## Meet “Andrew”

- 22-year-old single father, making regular payments on a couple of traffic tickets.
- Lost his job after his son was diagnosed with leukemia
- Fines were handed off to a collections agency, with an extra \$300 “civil assessment” tacked on for “failure to pay”
- The court refused to hear his case unless he paid the full fine amount, and his license was suspended



# Solution: Ability To Pay and Proportional Consequences

	<b>Proportional Consequence</b>			
<b>Population</b>	Get help. Fine resolved if person receives X hours of help (counseling, addiction services, health services, etc.)	Perform community service	Fine payment based on ability to pay. Payment plan offered.	Regular fine
<b>Youth under 18</b>				
<b>People struggling with homelessness</b>				
<b>Very low-income</b>				
<b>Working Poor</b>				
<b>Middle-income</b>				
<b>Upper-income</b>				