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.
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

San Francisco Fines and Fees

- Criminal Justice Fines/Fees
- Child Support Debt
- Transportation Fines/Fees
- Bail
- Driver’s License Suspensions
- Quality of Life Citations
1.) What is the goal of the fine or fee?
2) Who receives these fines and fees?

### Solutions

#### Goal

- **Revenue**
- **Behavior Change**

#### Population Receiving Fine/Fee

- **All Income Levels**
- **Vulnerable Population**

#### Create Sliding Scale Fine/Fee

**Create Sliding Scale Fine/Fee**

**Or Offer Low Income Waivers**

*Examples include application fees for government programs, or fees charged for government services such as summer camp fees*

#### Create Sliding Scale Fees Based On Ability to Pay

*Examples include many common tickets and citations, such as parking tickets, traffic tickets, library fines, etc.*

#### Eliminate Fee or penalty

**Eliminate Fee or penalty**

*Examples include fees charged to people exiting the criminal justice system, intended solely to raise revenue, and assessed almost exclusively to low-income people struggling to get back on their feet*

#### Create Nonmonetary Solutions, Such As Community Service, or Receiving Social Services in Lieu of Payment

*Examples include tickets issued to people struggling with homelessness for violations such as camping or blocking sidewalk*
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

- Ability to Pay
- Child Support Debt
- San Francisco Fines and Fees
- Transportation Fines/Fees
- Quality of Life Citations
- Driver's License Suspensions
- Bail
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.
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.
GOAL:
To ensure consequences for transportation violations hold people accountable but do not pose an inequitable burden for low income San Franciscans.
BAIL

**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

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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Proportional Consequence</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Youth under 18</td>
<td>Get help. Fine resolved if person receives X hours of help (counseling, addiction services, health services, etc.)</td>
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<tr>
<td>People struggling with homelessness</td>
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<tr>
<td>Very low-income</td>
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<tr>
<td>Working Poor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Middle-income</td>
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<td>Upper-income</td>
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