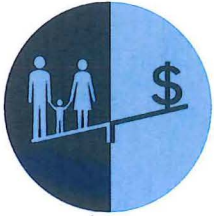


Received in Committee - May 17, 2017



INITIAL FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

San Francisco Fines Fees Task Force

PRESENTATION TO THE SAN FRANCISCO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:
May 17, 2017

**THE FINANCIAL
JUSTICE PROJECT**
SAN FRANCISCO

OVERVIEW: THE SAN FRANCISCO FINES AND FEES TASK FORCE

Our Goal:

Make policy recommendations to reform fines, fees, and financial penalties that inequitably impact low-income San Franciscans and people of color

Task Force Members include:

- Treasurer/Tax Collector
- Office of Economic & Workforce Development
- Human Services Agency
- Public Defender's Office
- District Attorney's Office
- Municipal Transportation Agency
- Adult Probation
- Department of Child Support Services
- Community Housing Partnership
- Coalition on Homelessness
- Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights
- Bay Area Legal Aid



OVERVIEW: THE FINANCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

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

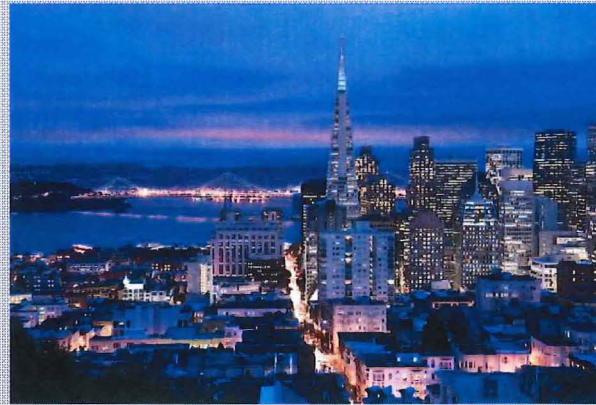
Our goal: Assess and reform how fines, fees, and financial penalties impact struggling San Franciscans

- Build our understanding of the problem and potential solutions.
- Advance reforms that work for San Franciscans, the City, and our community.
- Tell the real life stories of how people suffer from financial injustice.
- Share our financial justice agenda for San Francisco with other cities.



TOP LESSONS

San Francisco is a leader in reforming fines and fees.



Cities and States are becoming increasingly reliant on fine and fee revenue, according to emerging research.

TOP LESSONS



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Steep fines and fees that are **beyond people's ability to pay** can **dig people into financial holes** that are hard to get out of.

TOP LESSONS



In San Francisco, the burden of these fines and fees falls heavily on the African American Community.

TOP LESSONS



TOP LESSONS



Steep fines and fees can be a lose-lose, for citizens and for government.



Better data is sorely needed about these problems and potential solutions.



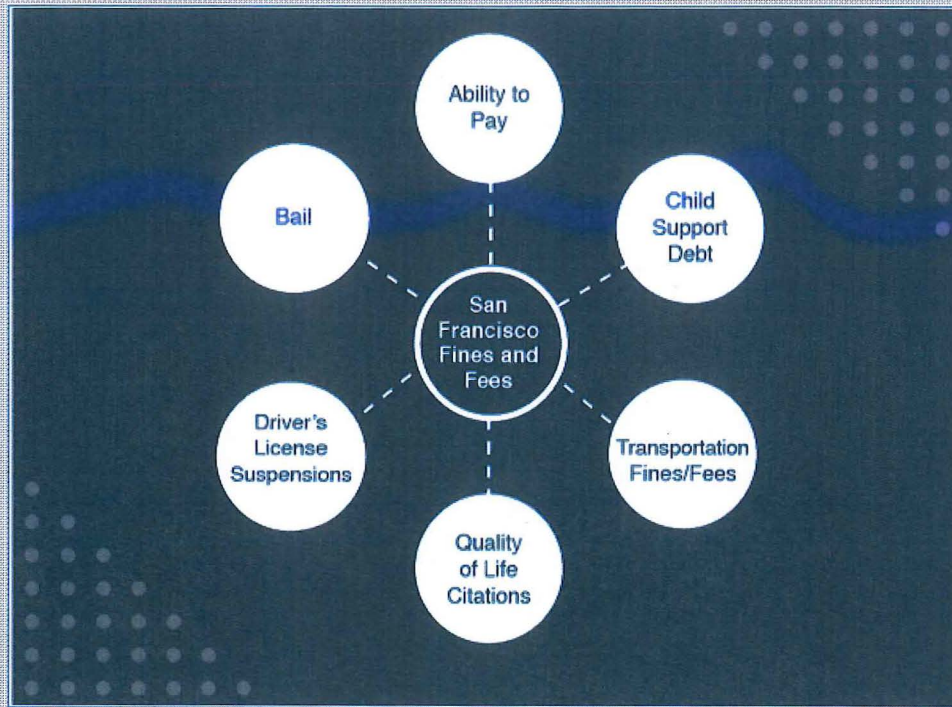
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Solutions exist that work for both government and citizens. We want to make the consequence fit the offense, and not hit the poor or people of color harder than other people in the community.

TOP LESSONS



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.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Offer ability to pay processes with specific attributes
- Offer flexible payment plans and community service options
- Allow individuals to verify inability to pay by showing enrollment in public benefits
- Use the same process across all City/County/Court proceedings.

RECOMMENDATIONS: DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSIONS

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 INCLUDE:

- Make permanent the San Francisco Superior Court's policy to not refer failures to pay to the Department of Motor Vehicles
- Create an ability to pay process throughout the traffic court proceedings.
- Advance reforms in juvenile traffic courts
- Support and advocate to pass SB185, which would eliminate this process statewide

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Stop adding a \$300 civil assessment fee to quality of life violations
- Streamline the process to allow individuals who receive these citations to resolve them through receiving social services
- Prioritize written admonishments rather than citations when possible.

RECOMMENDATIONS: TRANSPORTATION FINES AND FEES

GOAL:

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

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Expand community service and payment plan options and make them more accessible
- Lower fare evasion tickets and options to clear them
- Expand towing and boot fine relief
- Add information about alternative payment options to the initial citation
- As possible, base citations on ability to pay

RECOMMENDATIONS: 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 INCLUDE:

- Lower the financial burden of bail
- Explore the creation of a community revolving bail fund
- Increase oversight of the local bail bond industry
- Increase the use of current alternatives such as Supervised Pretrial Release
- Engage in statewide advocacy for reform.

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.

RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE:

- Develop and pilot a program to erase delinquent child support debt owed to the state if they can pay down a portion of the delinquent debt
- Increase nonmonetary options to pay down debt
- Continue to seek realistic child support orders, reinstate driver's licenses, and non-jail alternatives