



WE URGE YOU TO SUPPORT HOUSE BILL 636

House Bill 636 Enact Criminal Justice Debt Reform

Primary Sponsors: Representatives Alston, C. Smith, Buansi, and John

WHY REFORM IS NEEDED:

- Since 1999, the number of criminal court fees has increased from 4 to 52 and the amount of the fees has ballooned over 250%, with the base cost for use of court increasing from \$61 to \$176.
- In North Carolina, which has the 14th highest poverty rate in the nation, debt is an experience for thousands of residents. Over 650,000, or 1 in 12 people, in North Carolina have unpaid criminal court debt.
- The inability to pay court fines and fees can lead to harsh penalties such as suspended driver's licenses, extended probation, property liens, or incarceration.
- People of color and people from low-income communities are disproportionately impacted by the consequences of criminal court debt

MAJOR COMPONENTS OF HOUSE BILL 636:

- Ends driver's license suspension for unpaid traffic-related court fines and fees or for missing a court date;
- Requires that the court conduct an ability to pay assessment before imposing fines and fees on the defendant;
- Reduces the fee for missing a court date from \$200 to \$100;
- Makes the \$250 community service fees waivable;
- Eliminates the \$20 installment/payment plan fee;
- Waives the \$40/month probation fee when a person's probation is extended solely for unpaid fines and fees;
- Clarifies that the cost for the DNA tests should equal the actual costs incurred to conduct the DNA test, up to \$600;
- Repeals the requirement that written notice be sent to all impacted government agencies before court costs can be reduced, waived, or remitted; and
- Eliminates the annual report from the Administrative Office of the Courts that compiles information about judges who have waived or remitted criminal court costs throughout the year.