We are a group of local, state, and national organizations and advocates calling for an end to the assessment and collection of fees and fines imposed on young people and their families by the justice system.

The murder of Michael Brown and the resulting investigation into Ferguson, Missouri by the Department of Justice found that local law enforcement was more focused on revenue generation than community safety needs. Unfortunately, Ferguson was not unique. Nearly every state authorizes courts and localities to charge fees, fines, and other monetary sanctions to youth and their families.

Fees – costs charged to young people and their families for their involvement in and contact with the justice system – force families to pay for their child’s detention, electronic ankle monitors, probation supervision, and even a court-appointed public defender. Fines – punishments imposed on youth for certain behavior – can be levied against families and young people for truancy, curfew violations, and other status offenses.

Both fees and fines drown youth and their families in debt and can come with steep consequences for nonpayment, including tax refund intercepts, wage garnishment, and continued involvement with the justice system. These fees and fines operate as a regressive tax by burdening low-income youth and families. In addition, due to targeted policing and oversurveillance, Black, Brown, and Indigenous youth are overrepresented in the justice system. As a result, they face more fees and fines and often higher amounts, which only exacerbates existing inequities in communities of color. Fee and fine abolition is fundamentally both a racial and economic justice issue.

Further, research indicates that fees and fines are linked to higher rates of recidivism, undermining the system’s stated goals of youth rehabilitation. Additionally, fees and fines are simply an ineffective and unsustainable revenue source. Jurisdictions often spend more money attempting to collect fees and fines from families than they are able to recover. Even if fees and fines were fiscally efficient for state and local governments, relying on youth and their families to generate potential revenue creates a perverse incentive for officials to keep youth entangled in the system.

Advocates across the country are working to abolish fees and fines for youth and their families in the justice system. (See the most recent map of state and local advocacy efforts here.) This issue has gained widespread and bipartisan support and we are hopeful that more jurisdictions will take action to end this practice. We urge state and local elected leaders to take a crucial step towards racial and economic justice for our communities by abolishing all fees and fines imposed on young people in the justice system and their families.
The following organizations have signed on\(^1\) in support of ending fees and fines imposed on youth in the justice system:

#cut50
1Hood Media
A New Way of Life Reentry Project
ACLU National
ACLU of California
ACLU of Hawaii
ACLU of Kansas
ACLU of Nevada
ACLU of Pennsylvania
ACLU of West Virginia
ACT for Women and Girls
Adolescent Health Working Group
Adolescent Representation Clinic Columbia Law School
Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
Advocates for Children and Youth
African American Juvenile Justice Project
Alabama Appleseed Center for Law and Justice
Alianza for Youth Justice
All of Us or None/Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Allegheny County Controller's Office
Alliance for Boys and Men of Color
Alliance for Police Accountability
Amachi Pittsburgh
American Children's Campaign
Anti-Recidivism Coalition
Arizona Justice Alliance
Arkansas Advocates for Children
Arts for Healing and Justice Network
B-More Awesome Inc.
Bay Area Community Resources
Berkeley Underground Scholars
Black Girls Equity Alliance
Black Women for Positive Change
Black Women's Policy Agenda
Boston College Civil Rights Clinic
Brilliantly Blessed Community Health and Wellness
Bronx Defenders

\(^{1}\) This includes organizations that signed on to an April 2020 statement calling for a moratorium on fees and fines for youth and/or a June 2021 letter to the Department of Justice asking for a reissuance of an advisory to eliminate fees and fines for youth.
Community Advocacy Lab, Columbia Law School
Community Legal Services in East Palo Alto
Community Works
Connecticut Justice Alliance
Contra Costa County Public Defender's Office
Criminal Defense Clinic, Texas A&M Law
Criminal Justice Policy Program, Harvard Law School
Criminal Justice Program, UCLA School of Law
Cultivating Resilient Youth
Deep Center
Delaware Center for Justice, Inc.
Delores Barr Weaver Policy Center
Destination Innovation Inc for Progeny
Disability Rights Arkansas
Drug Policy Alliance
Due Process Institute
East Bay Community Law Center
Ecolucion
Ella Baker Center for Human Rights
Empower Mississippi
Equal Justice Under Law
Equality Federation
Families and Friends of Louisiana’s Incarcerated Children (FFLIC)
Family Law Practice Clinic of CUNY School of Law
Fines and Fees Justice Center
First Focus on Children
Florida Juvenile Resentencing and Review Project
Forum for Youth Investment
Foundation of HOPE
Generation Progress
Georgetown Juvenile Justice Clinic and Initiative
Girls for Gender Equity
Growing Greatness
Health Justice Innovations, LLC
Healthy Start, Inc.
Human Rights for Kids
Idaho Justice Project
Illinois Juvenile Defender Resource Center
Indiana Public Defender Council
Insight Center for Community Economic Development
Intercultural Development Research Association
Jomoworks
Just Cities
Justice Action Network
Justice for Children, Moritz College of Law
Justice For Families
Justice Reinvest Coalition of Alameda County
Justice2Jobs Coalition
Juvenile Justice Clinic, University of Michigan Law School
Juvenile Justice Initiative of Illinois
Kansas Action for Children
Kansas Appleseed
La Raza Centro Legal Inc.
Lambda Legal Defense & Education Fund, Inc.
Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights
Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights of the SF Bay Area
Legal Aid Justice Center
Legal Clinics at Southwestern Law School
Legal Rights Center
Legal Services for Prisoners with Children
Lone Star Justice Alliance
Louisiana Center for Children’s Rights
Maine Center for Juvenile Policy and Law
Maine Youth Justice
Maricopa County Public Defender's Office
Maryland Office of the Public Defender
Michigan Center for Youth Justice
Midwest Juvenile Defender Center
Mississippi Center for Justice
MomsRising
Mountain State Justice
NAACP
National Association of Counsel for Children
National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
National Center for Access to Justice
National Center for Law and Economic Justice
National Consumer Law Center
National Crittenton
National Juvenile Defender Center
National Juvenile Justice Network
National Network for Youth, Inc.
National Parents Union
New Hour for Women and Children-Long Island
New Jersey Institute for Social Justice
New Jersey Office of the Public Defender
New Jersey Parents Caucus Memories
New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty
New Mexico Voices for Children
North Carolina Community Bail Fund of Durham
North Carolina Fines & Fees Coalition
North Carolina Justice Center
Office of Child Development, University of Pittsburgh
Office of Ramsey County Attorney John Choi
Operation Restoration
Oregon Justice Resource Center
Out For Justice
Pa'lante Restorative Justice Program
Pacific Juvenile Defender Center
Peace and Justice Committee of St. Michael's Episcopal Church
Pennsylvania Coalition for Justice
Pennsylvania Interbranch Commission for Gender, Racial and Ethnic Fairness
Pennsylvania Juvenile Court Judges’ Commission
Performing Statistics
Pitt County Coalition Against Racism
Pittsburgh Board of Public Education
PolicyLink
Progeny
Public Counsel
Public Justice
Public Justice Center
R Street Institute
Rhode Island KIDS COUNT
Rights4Girls
RISE for Youth
Riverside All of Us Or None
Robert F. Kennedy Human Rights
Root & Rebound
Rubicon Programs
Rutgers University Center on Youth Justice and Human Development
Rutgers Criminal and Youth Justice Clinic
Ruth's Way, Inc.
RYSE Center for Youth
San Francisco Financial Justice Project
San Jose State University Record Clearance Project
Schuylkill Public Defender
Searcy Consulting, LLC
Seton Hall Law School Center for Social Justice
SF Financial Justice Project
Silver Moon Strategies
Silver State Equality
Sister Warriors Freedom Coalition
South Carolina Appleseed Legal Justice Center
Southern Center for Human Rights
Southern Poverty Law Center
Southwest Juvenile Defender Center
SPAN Parent Advocacy Network
Stand for Children
Stand for Children AZ
Stand for Children CO
Stand for Children Dallas
Stand for Children Illinois
Stand for Children IN
Stand for Children LA
Stand for Children OR
Stand for Children TN
Stand for Children WA
Starting Over, Inc
Strategies for Youth
Students for Sensible Drug Policy
Take Action Mon Valley
TeamChild
Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers
Texas Appleseed
Texas Civil Rights Project
Texas Fair Defense Project
The Architects of Justice
The Choice Program at UMBC
The Commonwealth Institute
The Fortas Foundation
The Gathering for Justice
The Green Life Earth Island project
The Honorable Mik Pappas, MDJ
The Institute for Compassion in Justice
The Legal Aid Society of New York
The New York Law School Post Conviction Innocence Clinic
The Sentencing Project
Touro Law Center Education and Youth Justice Clinic
Tulane Juvenile Law Clinic
Tzedek DC
Ubuntu Village NOLA
UCLA Law COVID Behind Bars Data Project
UCLA Law Criminal Justice Program
UCLA Prison Law and Policy Program
Underground GRIT
Underground Scholars Initiative - UC Riverside
Underground Scholars Initiative, Irvine
University of Miami School of Law Children & Youth Law Clinic
University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing
University of St. Thomas Criminal and Juvenile Defense clinic
USI/ Reziliency
Utah Juvenile Defender Attorneys
Vanderbilt Law School Youth Opportunity Clinic
Voices for Children
Voices for Utah Children
W. Haywood Burns Institute
Washington U Law School Civil Rights Clinic
West End P.O.W.E.R.
Western Center on Law and Poverty
Women & Girls Foundation of Southwest Pennsylvania
Woodland Hills School District
Wyoming Children's Law Center
YogaRoots On Location
Young Women's Freedom Center
Youth First Initiative
Youth Justice Clinic University of North Carolina School of Law
Youth Law Center
Youth Leadership Institute
Youth Sentencing and Reentry Project
Youth, Education, and Justice Clinic, University of Maryland Carey School of Law
Youth, Rights & Justice