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GROUPS HAIL SAN MATEO COUNTY FOR DISHARGING \$12.6 MILLION IN PREVIOUSLY ASSESSED JUVENILE FEES; CALL FOR ALL CALIFORNIA COUNTIES TO BRING ABOUT “DEBT-FREE JUSTICE” FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES.

SAN MATEO—Today, the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to discharge more than \$12.6 million in fees previously assessed to families with youth in the juvenile justice system.

The county action comes in the wake of [Senate Bill 190](#) (Mitchell, Lara), a major, bipartisan juvenile justice reform bill signed by Governor Jerry Brown in October 2017 that ended the harmful, unlawful and costly practice of charging administrative fees to families for their children’s public defender, detention, supervision, electronic monitoring, and drug testing.

Although SB 190 ended new fee assessments effective January 1, 2018, counties across the state have begun discharging fees assessed prior to 2018. San Mateo previously charged families for their children’s public defender and detention. Today’s action by the Board of Supervisors will formally relieve more than 6,000 San Mateo families of millions of dollars in outstanding fee obligations and court judgments.

[Research](#) by the Policy Advocacy Clinic at the UC Berkeley School of Law documented how such fees undermine the rehabilitative and public safety goals of the juvenile system. Because of discrimination in the juvenile system, even after controlling for underlying offense, researchers found that families of color are liable for higher fees than families of white youth. Moreover, criminologists have found that charging juvenile fees correlates with higher recidivism.

According to 21-year old Daniel Casillas, whose family was billed thousands of dollars by San Mateo County for his involvement in the juvenile system, “We often think of incarceration as something that just takes physical form, but we don’t evaluate the emotional and financial costs to both the youth and family. Those emotional and financial costs continue after the youth is no longer physically incarcerated. Upon release the financial burden still remains and continues to impact reunification and rehabilitation. Forgiveing fees relieves a significant burden.”

Tara Ford of Stanford Law School's Youth and Education Law Project hailed the Board's action: "I am thrilled that San Mateo County joined the other Bay Area counties in discharging this regressive and racially discriminatory debt hanging over struggling families—removing this barrier to rehabilitation will make a tangible difference in the lives of so many youth in our community."

Stephanie Campos-Bui, one of the authors of the UC Berkeley study, noted that "More than half of all counties have now ended collection of juvenile fees in California and the rest should follow suit, including discharging outstanding debt and refunding families for unlawfully assessed fees. California can serve as a model for all states with a debt-free juvenile justice system."

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