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**ORANGE COUNTY ENDS RACIALLY DISCRIMINATORY WEALTH
EXTRACTION FROM THOUSANDS OF FAMILIES AMID COVID-19 CRISIS**

SANTA ANA -- Today the Orange County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to end collection and discharge \$18.5 million in fees charged to families with children in the juvenile system prior to 2018. The Board's bipartisan vote follows closely on the heels of decisions made by [San Diego](#), [Riverside](#), and [Stanislaus](#) counties to end the collection of more than \$55 million in outstanding juvenile fees earlier this year, citing the harm to county residents under COVID-19 and [research](#) about fees undermining rehabilitation and increasing recidivism.

"Thank you, Orange County, for your action on juvenile fees," said Oscar Villeda, a local father who will benefit from today's vote. "Families like mine are working hard day in and day out to pay for our basic necessities, some even working weekends so that we earn enough and can try to live a better life. The elimination of these fees is a great relief, allowing us to sleep better at night, especially in the economic crisis caused by COVID-19."

[Senate Bill 190](#), which went into effect on January 1, 2018, prohibited counties from charging new juvenile fees, but it did not require counties to end collection of previously assessed fees, much of which is decades old. According to the [Orange County Probation Department](#), they will eliminate the outstanding fees immediately by filing necessary legal documents, notifying affected families, and returning any payments made after today's decision.

"With Orange County's action, 42 of California's 58 counties have relieved hundreds of thousands of families of approximately \$350 million in juvenile fees, which our research has shown to be regressive, racially discriminatory, and harmful to youth well-being," said Stephanie Campos-Bui, Deputy Director of the Policy Advocacy Clinic at UC Berkeley School of Law.

"This decision by the county's Board of Supervisors will be a great relief to the families carrying this tremendous burden for too long," said Michael Harris, Senior Director, Juvenile

Justice and Legal Advocacy at the National Center for Youth Law. "It was one that was disproportionately born by families of color and will help Orange County become a more equitable and just community."

Orange County [made headlines](#) after driving a single mother to sell her home and eventually to file for bankruptcy after she was unable to pay over \$16,000 in juvenile fees for her son's public defender and his detention in a juvenile facility. Another family, featured in a May 2020 [story](#) in the Orange County Register, has struggled to pay over \$8,000 that they were charged for their son's detention nearly a decade ago. The County threatened to garnish their wages and intercept their tax return after they were unable to make a recent payment.

"After years of organizing by families, youth and community members, we are relieved to see Orange County has ended the unjust practice of doubly taxing families to fund probation and the courts," said Crystal Anthony and Suzanne Campbell, Co-Executive Directors for Underground GRIT. "This is especially important to alleviate the burden this policy has created for our youth and families."

Although today's action will bring immense financial and emotional relief to Orange County families, 16 counties continue to pursue approximately \$15 million in outstanding juvenile fees. Tulare County is collecting nearly three-quarters of the remaining fees statewide with a balance of almost \$11 million, according to this [interactive map](#) maintained by the Berkeley researchers.

"With all the growing momentum across the state, it is time for us to pass [Senate Bill 1290](#) and end the collection of these fees once-and-for all in California," said Jessica Bartholow, of the Western Center on Law and Poverty. SB 1290, co-authored by Senators Maria Elena Durazo and Holly J. Mitchell, passed out of the Senate with bipartisan support and will be heard in the Assembly when the legislature reconvenes.

"These fees are harmful no matter what side of the county line you live on," said Bartholow. "We commend the Orange County Board of Supervisors for voting to end their collection and urge the remaining counties and state to follow suit as soon as possible. California should be a national beacon of debt-free justice."

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