



Supreme Court
STATE OF LOUISIANA
New Orleans

CHIEF JUSTICE
BERNETTE J. JOHNSON Seventh District
JUSTICES
WILLIAM J. CRAIN First District
SCOTT J. CRICHTON Second District
JAMES T. GENOVESE Third District
JAMES H. BODDIE, JR Fourth District (pro tempore)
JEFFERSON D. HUGHES III Fifth District
JOHN L. WEIMER Sixth District

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September 17, 2020

To Our Judges:

Act 146 of the 2020 Regular Session authorizes district courts to waive juvenile costs and fees for any reason. I am writing to urge all courts with jurisdiction over juvenile delinquency adjudications to consider waiving or suspending the imposition and collection of fines and fees on Louisiana's most vulnerable youth and families during this unprecedented time in our state.

We all know that Louisianans face devastating economic and health consequences as a result of the novel coronavirus outbreak. We have had over 153,000 confirmed cases, over 4,900 deaths, and the highest per capita infection rate in the nation (approximately 3,100 cases per 100,000 residents).ⁱ More Louisiana workers have filed for unemployment this year than during both the Great Recession of the late-2000s and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in 2005.ⁱⁱ The economic outlook for thousands of Louisianans remains precarious.

In addition, Hurricane Laura has had a devastating impact on the homes, economy and infrastructure of a large part of Louisiana. This impact is likely to exacerbate the social and economic effects of COVID-19.

Therefore, to support the efforts of our other branches of government to relieve the effects of this pandemic for all Louisianans and reduce further financial burdens and health risks for Louisiana children, families, and community members, I urge you to exercise the discretion vested in you by Act 146 to suspend the assessment and collection of juvenile court fees and costs wherever possible. Also, in cases where fees or costs were previously imposed, I particularly urge suspension of contempt findings during these challenging times for parents or guardians who fail to pay supervision fees as a condition of a child's probation or parole.

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A copy of Act 146 and a letter from Rep. Royce Duplessis and Rep. Ted James are attached. Thank you for all you are doing, and continue to do, in these challenging times to ensure justice, fairness, and safety for all Louisianans, including our most vulnerable.

Sincerely,



Chief Justice Bernette Joshua Johnson

ⁱ *Louisiana Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information*, LOUISIANA DEPT. OF HEALTH, <https://ldh.la.gov/coronavirus/> (last visited September 8, 2020); *United States COVID-19 Cases and Deaths by State*, CENTERS FOR DISEASE CONTROL & PREVENTION, <https://www.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases> (last visited August 27, 2020).

ⁱⁱ Robert Habans, *COVID-19 Economic Analysis*, DATA CTR. (Apr. 16, 2020), <https://www.datacenterresearch.org/covid-19-data-and-information/covid-19-economic-analysis/>.