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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 24, 2023

**ILLINOIS MOVES CLOSER TO ECONOMIC JUSTICE WITH STRONG LEGISLATIVE SUPPORT FOR
BILL TO ELIMINATE JUVENILE COURT FEES & FINES**

SPRINGFIELD — Debt Free Justice Illinois, a statewide network of bipartisan organizations, and youth and racial justice advocates, today celebrates the passage of legislation through the Illinois General Assembly aimed at eliminating the unjust assessment of juvenile court fees and fines against Illinois youth and their families.

Today's Senate passage is the final legislative action for the bill and a momentous step in the direction of economic justice for the state. Senate Bill 1463, sponsored by Senator Robert Peters and Representative Justin Slaughter, is aimed at abolishing juvenile court fees and fines in delinquency proceedings. Twenty other states, both majority Democratic and Republican, have eliminated or reduced these fees and fines in recent years.

"Today's vote in the Illinois Senate is further proof that Illinois intends to continue moving in the direction of economic justice for Illinois youth and their families," said Sen. Peters. "The status quo of unjust fees and fines do not work for our state's young people and families and do not keep our communities safe. We must work toward accountability and rehabilitation for Illinois' young people in the juvenile court system, not punishing them with monetary fees and fines."

"I'm proud to stand with the advocates across our state for economic justice and working families," said Rep. Slaughter. "Our vision of a fairer and more just juvenile court system is one that many other states have embraced. I encourage Governor Pritzker to sign this bill into law as quickly as possible and continue our work of building up youth and families to dismantle system inequalities and protect Illinois' most vulnerable communities."

Juvenile court fees and fines can range from \$25 to over \$800 and can quickly add up to thousands of dollars for a single family, depending on where they live. This unjust disparity creates a patchwork of injustice across the state, landing hardest on youth and families of color living in underserved communities.

“The Debt Free Justice Illinois Coalition is grateful for the vision and leadership of Senator Peters and Representative Slaughter to see this bill through the General Assembly,” said Aimee Galvin, Government Affairs Director of Stand for Children Illinois and member of the Debt Free Justice Illinois coalition. “We must continue our work to dismantle this system which unjustly penalizes Illinois young people and their families. We should allow the system to focus on accountability and rehabilitation rather than monetary penalties that do not keep our communities safer.”

“The combined efforts of the legislative champions and Coalition partners will make an enormous difference in the lives of families across Illinois,” said Anita Weinberg, a professor and Co-director of the Civitas ChildLaw Center, and Director of the Legislation & Policy Clinic at Loyola University Chicago School of Law. The Clinic is a Coalition member. “We are dedicated to ensuring a fair and just legal system for all young people and their families. There is more work to be done as we implement this legislation, but getting to this point is an important milestone on the journey to economic justice.”

“The lives of young people in Illinois will be better because of this legislation,” said Tyshianna Bankhead, Executive Director of the Faith Coalition for the Common Good. “We connected with young people up and down our state and heard about the negative impacts these court fees and fines had on their family. Getting rid of those fees and fines will allow them to take accountability for their actions without sacrificing their futures to pay a monetary fine – something that doesn’t even keep our communities safer. This is good for Illinois communities and good for Illinois families.”

“Today’s victory in the General Assembly makes Illinois the first Midwest state to achieve comprehensive fee and fine repeal for youth and families in juvenile court,” said Anavictoria Avila and Cameron Clark, Counsel for Debt Free Justice Illinois. “Illinois joins a national movement of over 20 states in the country that have taken action towards ending the assessment or collection of juvenile fees and fines. We are proud to support our local partners in this work and the Coalition looks forward to continued engagement with counties and stakeholders as the state implements this relief for families.”

SB1463 would prohibit courts, state agencies, and local government entities from assessing fees and fines in juvenile court in delinquency proceedings and requires the automatic discharge of all outstanding debt. Enacting the bill is important in furthering the goals of strengthening Illinois’ vulnerable families, improving the way we approach youth rehabilitation, and increasing the credibility and effectiveness of our public systems.

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Debt Free Justice Illinois is a statewide coalition of advocacy organizations, academic institutions, and law and public policy experts dedicated to eliminating the fees and fines imposed on youth and their families in the juvenile court system. The Coalition is supported by a bipartisan network of Illinois-based and national groups that serve or represent youth and families.

Learn more about the Coalition and our work at debtfreejusticeil.org.