
Re: COVID-19 Emergency Executive Order – Suspension of Administrative Fees, Costs, and Taxes Related to Juvenile Delinquency Cases

March 27th, 2020

Governor John Bel Edwards
900 North 3rd Street, #4
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Dear Governor Edwards,

We, the undersigned, write to request your immediate executive action on a matter of grave and acute concern to Louisiana families impacted financially as a result of administrative fees, costs, and taxes imposed by the juvenile legal system, families that are disproportionately people of color and predominantly low-income.

Current Louisiana law allows or requires the imposition of a variety of administrative fees, costs, and taxes on youth and parents when a young person is involved with the juvenile legal system. Juvenile fees, costs, and taxes can amount to hundreds or even thousands of dollars. Research has found that such impositions are exceptionally harmful to youth and families, and that they undermine youth rehabilitation.

Numerous jurisdictions have already taken necessary steps to stop the imposition of and collection on debt in order to stem the harms of the ongoing public health and economic crisis. Moreover, several states have already eliminated juvenile administrative fees, costs, and taxes altogether. Pending legislation, House Bill 556 (Duplessis, 2020), would eliminate the imposition and collection of juvenile fees, costs, and taxes in Louisiana, but the bill cannot be heard while the legislature is suspended.

Given the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency you proclaimed, and the significant and deepening economic impacts of the public health crisis, including the substantial loss of income hindering Louisianan's ability to pay for housing, food, utility bills, and other life necessities:

We urge you to take the following actions as part of an executive order:

1. Order the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice, and all courts with jurisdiction over delinquency cases to suspend immediately the imposition and collection of all administrative fees, costs, and taxes related to juvenile delinquency cases until at least December 31st, 2020.

2. Order the full discharge of all outstanding debts related to juvenile administrative fees, costs, and taxes.
3. Order the immediate cessation of all new referrals of outstanding juvenile administrative fees, costs, and taxes to the Department of Revenue.
4. Order the Department of Revenue to suspend all tax intercepts, bank levies, and wage garnishments for outstanding juvenile administrative fees, costs, and taxes.

During this crisis, we need to relieve Louisiana families from the hardship of making ongoing payments on government debt burdens. This order will help residents, communities, and the state as a whole emerge from the current crisis healthier, and more secure, productive, and hopeful.

Sincerely,

CASA New Orleans

Crescent City Media
Group/Center for Civic Action

East Baton Rouge Parish Prison
Reform Coalition

Families and Friends of
Louisiana's Incarcerated
Children

Greater New Orleans Housing
Alliance

Healing Minds NOLA

Hector Linares, Associate
Clinical Professor, Loyola
University New Orleans,
College of Law

Housing LOUISIANA

Housing NOLA

Institute of Women & Ethnic
Studies

Jesuit Social Research Institute,
Loyola University New Orleans

Justice and Accountability
Center

Justice for Families

League of Women Voters

Louisiana Center for Children's
Rights

Madalyn K. Wasilczuk, Assistant
Professor, LSU Paul M. Hebert
Law Center

Making Connections New
Orleans

New Orleans Youth Alliance

New Pathways New Orleans

Orleans Public Defenders

Policy Advocacy Clinic, UC
Berkeley, School of Law

Power Coalition for Equity and
Justice

PREACH

Pres Kabacoff

Reentry Mediation Institute of
Louisiana

Rethink

Rich Family Ministries

Royce Duplessis, Louisiana
State Representative, District
93

Southern Poverty Law Center

The Anti-Defamation League

The St. Charles Center for Faith
and Action

Travis Hill Schools

Ubuntu Village

VOTE

Wendy Hodgson, parent