



Dear members of the committee,

I am the state policy manager for the Justice Action Network (JAN), the nation's largest bipartisan criminal justice reform organization, and I am writing in support of House Bill 2073 to eliminate fines and fees imposed on kids in Kansas. JAN works in nearly 20 states across the country—from Louisiana, Missouri, and Arkansas, to Oregon, Washington, and New Mexico. We support lawmakers like yourselves interested in enacting bipartisan justice reform laws that improve lives and protect the safety of the public. For us, bipartisanship is not simply a slogan; it is a mandate. We believe laws supported by lawmakers from all parties lead to better, more durable outcomes.

This legislation is the right thing to do to strengthen families, bolster government accountability, and, most importantly, keep communities safe. Eliminating fines and fees is a bipartisan reform that makes sense no matter your ideological vantage point. Similar reforms are the law of the land now in red, blue, and purple states. JAN believes that Kansas can follow Republican and Democratic leaders in states like Louisiana, where lawmakers eliminated juvenile justice system fines through a unanimous vote. As several prominent national conservative groups like Americans for Prosperity and Right on Crime wrote in a letter calling for an end to youth fines and fees, “costs imposed on youth and their families for a young person’s involvement in the justice system operate in part as a regressive tax on vulnerable communities.” HB 2073 simply aims to eliminate this tax and replace the cost (estimated by the courts at roughly half a million dollars per year in revenue) with more consistent funding for juvenile justice system operations.

There is no evidence that imposing fines and fees on kids makes Kansans safer—and some evidence that financial obligations can increase the victimization of communities through higher recidivism. One strong study of juvenile justice-involvement young people in Pennsylvania found that financial obligations like fines and fees was correlated with higher rates of reoffending, even after the researchers “controlled” for many other factors (prior history, risk to recidivate, etc.) to isolate that fines and fees were a driver



of youth crime. In other words, research shows fines and fees like the one this bill eliminates can in fact make communities *less* safe.

In addition, imposing fines and fees on young people are so bureaucratically inefficient that they may even lose taxpayers money in the collection process. Fines and fees do not achieve what is ostensibly their main purpose: collecting funds to pay for system operation. Some lawmakers have looked at their own state's data and found that the rate of successful fine and fee collection from kids is so *low*—and the administrative cost of paying for these collection efforts so *high*—that this tax by another name ends up losing money for the state in terms of net revenue. The vital work that juvenile probation officers, victim advocates, judges and many others do every day deserves a better funding source.

When a kid must work to pay a fine to the county government, their scarce time is diverted from the process of rehabilitation and transition into successful adulthood. Focusing a young person's limited time, attention, and resources on earning money to fund their local government keeps them from the interventions that work best to keep the public safe—the exact type of programs that Kansas has focused on expanding in recent years. These programs include family therapy, substance use treatment, and better community supervision by training probation officers in motivational interviewing and other evidence-based techniques.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak about this important issue and for taking the time to consider House Bill 2073. This bill does the right thing for kids, families, community safety, and taxpayers. We urge the committee to support it.

Sincerely,

Noah Bein  
State Policy Manager  
Justice Action Network