



January 27, 2023

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Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice  
Written Testimony in Support of HB 2073  
House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice

Members of the House Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 2073, which would eliminate fines and fees for justice-involved youth in Kansas. Kansas Appleseed Center for Law and Justice is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization dedicated to the belief that Kansans, working together, can build a state full of thriving, inclusive, and just communities. We use data, research, and direct work with impacted Kansans to guide our policy advocacy.

### **Kansas Appleseed supports HB 2073.**

A growing number of states across the country have in recent years reduced or eliminated the use of fines and fees. Twelve states have passed statewide fee or fine elimination bills since 2015, including Louisiana, Texas, Colorado, New Mexico, Virginia, and Oregon. This national trend points to something that is becoming increasingly clear in every state across the country – fines and fees don't work for kids and they do far more harm than good.

The revised Kansas juvenile justice code establishes that the primary goals for the code include promoting public safety and improving the ability of youth to live more productively and responsibly in the community.<sup>1</sup> The elimination of fines and fees is an effective way of accomplishing these goals. Research shows that financial penalties actually increase the likelihood of recidivism among youth.<sup>2</sup>

Records provided by the Kansas Office of Judicial Administration (KOJA) to the Kansas Debt Free Justice coalition show that total court revenue from juvenile fees and fines in Kansas was under \$540,000 in 2020 and had decreased steadily since 2016. Research shows the administrative costs of collecting these fines and fees are quite high - sometimes requiring more spending on collection efforts than is actually generated in collection revenue.<sup>3</sup>

While fines and fees do not raise that much revenue for the state, they do impose a significant burden on Kansas families. A simple juvenile misdemeanor conviction for vandalism would typically result in fines and fees of over \$1,000 dollars by the time the docket fee, Supreme Court fee, public defender fee, booking fee, KBI fee, lab fee, and probation supervision fees are added on to the original fine. These

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<sup>1</sup> K.S.A. 38-2301(a).

<sup>2</sup> Piquero, A. & Jennings, W. "Research Note: Justice System–Imposed Financial Penalties Increase the Likelihood of Recidivism in a Sample of Adolescent Offenders." *Youth Violence and Juvenile Justice*. 2016. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1541204016669213>

<sup>3</sup> Menendez, M. & Eisen, L. "The Steep Costs of Criminal Justice Fees and Fines." Brennan Center for Justice. 2019. <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/steep-costs-criminal-justice-fees-and-fines>

finances and fees can turn into multi-year struggles as they multiply with collection fees over time for those without the means to pay. A low-income family should not face a different system of justice in Kansas.

Fines and fees simply do not work for kids. They run contrary to the stated goals of public safety and rehabilitation enshrined in Kansas law by increasing the likelihood of youth reoffending. They inefficiently generate limited and diminishing revenue for the state while imposing significant burdens on low-income Kansans. And they make racial disparities worse.

For all these reasons, Kansas Appleseed urges you to pass HB 2073 favorably.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of this bill. For any further information, please contact me at [mfonkert@kansasappleseed.org](mailto:mfonkert@kansasappleseed.org).