



The Cost We No Longer Pay

How Fine and Fee Reform Delivered Billions in Relief for Families

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Acknowledgements

The Fines and Fees Justice Center (FFJC) operates on the foundational principle of collective action. We never work alone. In our “focus” states FFJC’s staff are local leaders, who build broad coalitions to advance the fine and fee reforms most critical to the community. We also work with advocates and partners across the country through our national campaigns, Free to Drive and End Justice Fees. We provide technical and strategic assistance, resources and tools, research, communications and advocacy support to our partners, to help them advance reforms in their communities. Our model centers on meaningful collaboration with local leaders and building power with local advocates who drive the work in their states.

The reforms detailed in this report reflect the outcomes of this work and our partnership with state and local advocates and community leaders across the country. While we cannot list all our partners individually, the [Free to Drive](#) and [End Justice Fees campaign](#) coalitions members pages showcase many of the organizations that have championed driver’s license and fee elimination reforms statewide. Meanwhile, our Cities and Counties for Fine and Fee Justice cohorts have driven change at the local level.

This report captures the financial impact of fines and fees reforms in communities where FFJC has led or supported reforms alongside our partners. It reflects what can be achieved through collective effort. Yet this report reflects only the beginning of the impact of our shared journey with partners to change punitive and regressive practices and keep resources in the communities we serve.

We are deeply grateful to our partners, and all those committed to changing these harmful policies.

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Executive Summary

Since its founding in 2018, the Fines and Fees Justice Center (FFJC) has successfully led the campaigns for, or actively supported, 73 separate pieces of legislation that ended or significantly reformed 135 fine and fee policies nationwide. This report measures the direct financial relief that has resulted from those reforms.

Conservatively, we estimate that these reforms provided at least \$37.5 billion in financial relief - money that people can now spend to support themselves, their families and their communities.

Our criminal justice system is rife with fines and fees that state and local governments impose in order to generate revenue. Individuals and families saddled with fines and fees face severe consequences if they cannot afford to pay them, including additional financial penalties, driver's license suspensions, arrest, and jail. People living paycheck-to-paycheck and communities of color are disproportionately impacted, but anyone who misses just one payment can be trapped in an endless cycle of debt and punishment.

When these fine and fee policies are reformed or eliminated, the ensuing financial relief helps stabilize families, address racial wealth disparities, and increase opportunities.

We estimate this relief includes:

- \$84 million in fees that no longer have to be paid.
- \$3 million in fines that will not be charged.
- \$15.1 billion in earnings regained when people's driver's licenses are reinstated.
- \$19.2 billion in earnings retained for people who will no longer lose their driver's licenses for unpaid fines and fees.
- \$431 million in driver's license reinstatement fees waived and \$34 million in new reinstatement fees prevented annually.
- \$2.6 billion in outstanding fine and fee debt discharge.

These reforms keep money where it belongs, in the pockets of families and communities, and it is life-changing. For example, the \$37.5 billion alone is enough to pay for a full year of groceries for roughly 3.1 million families—enough to feed every family in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Antonio combined.

Our report also highlights the lived experiences of the people impacted by harmful fines and fees; men and women like Teon S., an Alabama mother who had her driver's license suspended for six years, all from the snowballing cost of a single ticket she received for an incorrectly-sized booster seat. Unable to drive, her children missed doctor's appointments, and she was forced to walk miles to get groceries for her family.

Teon's lived experiences and those of the others featured in the report are clear examples of a systemic problem: In a 2023 national survey, 1 in 3 people reported that they owed fines and fees in the past ten years; 99% of people who owed fines and fees reported that court debt affected their daily lives, and over half who were parents of minor children had to cut back on spending for two or more basic needs in order to pay their debt.

Our findings come after more than two years of extensive research and data collection aimed at trying to quantify what fine and fee reform really means for people. Significant implications from this impact evaluation include:

- **\$37.5 billion dollars is both a tremendous amount of direct financial relief, and a vast undercount of the true impact of fine and fee reforms.** Government data limitations prevented us from calculating impact estimates for about 28% of all reform legislation examined. Additionally, the scope of this report did not allow for impact analysis on indirect individual benefits to impacted people and their families, such as increased credit and access to loans, or the broader benefits to governments, such as increased tax revenue and increased economic activity in low-income communities. Nonetheless, even the partial picture of financial relief estimated here illustrates the enormous benefit that fine and fee reform brings to people and communities.
- **Discharging one-time debt creates significant financial relief in and of itself.** We estimate that just eight reforms across six states lifted \$2.6 billion dollars worth of outstanding fine and fee debt off of people's shoulders. Discharging one-time debt is a powerful tool to increase people's economic stability and mobility, and it often comes at no revenue loss to governments, because the debt was unlikely to be collected in the first place.
- **The formulas and assumptions in this analysis are customizable:** Policymakers and advocates can use the formulas and assumptions offered in this analysis to better understand what the direct impact of future reform might look like for their own jurisdictions. This can help policymakers understand the significant level of financial relief that fine and fee reforms can bring to the people and communities they represent.

By reforming fines and fees practices that have burdened people for years, we can create a justice system that truly treats people fairly, is funded equitably and is not used to generate revenue on the backs of marginalized people, families and communities.

The Cost We No Longer Pay

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Introduction

Since its founding in 2018, Fines and Fees Justice Center (FFJC) has successfully led the campaigns for, or actively supported, 73 separate pieces of legislation that ended or significantly reformed 135 fine and fee policies nationwide. This report measures the direct financial impact those reforms have provided to individuals and families, which we estimate as being **at least \$37.5 billion in financial relief**. This includes:

- \$84 million in fees that no longer have to be paid.
- \$3 million in fines that will not be charged.
- \$15.1 billion in earnings regained when people's driver's licenses are reinstated.
- \$19.2 billion in earnings retained for people who will no longer lose their driver's licenses for unpaid fines and fees.
- \$431 million in driver's license reinstatement fees waived and \$34 million in new reinstatement fees prevented annually.
- \$2.6 billion in outstanding fine and fee debt discharged.

The magnitude of this financial relief was calculated by FFJC staff and a PhD research consultant using the formulas described throughout this report, but it understates the actual financial relief these reforms have obtained. Whether due to a lack of reliable government data that makes calculating the impact of some reforms impossible or due to our cautious and intentional approach to how we used the data, our estimates are inevitably an undercount. Additionally, this report does *not* include the impacts that fine and fee relief has had on broader communities, state and local economies, and government revenue. Although these are important subjects of study, they are not within the scope of this report, which is limited to the estimated financial impact individuals (and by extension their families) experience. For these reasons, among others, our estimates reflect the *minimum* financial relief that people have likely felt as a result of the fine and fee reforms advanced by FFJC and our partners.

This report measures the direct financial impact those reforms have provided to individuals and families, which we estimate as being **at least \$37.5 billion in financial relief**.

Background: FFJC and the Problem of Fines and Fees

FFJC was founded to eliminate fees in the justice system, ensure that fines are equitably imposed, and end abusive collection practices. Our vision is a justice system that treats individuals fairly, is funded equitably, and is not used to generate revenue.

Over the past 40 years, legislators have steadily increased fines, imposing harsh financial penalties that many people cannot afford to pay. Simultaneously, state and local jurisdictions have increasingly charged fees to individuals involved with the system as a way of raising revenue for the justice system or other public services¹. Both fines and fees are used to raise revenue and balance public budgets. The total amount of fines and fees imposed – a person's "court debt" – can easily total hundreds, thousands, and even tens of thousands of dollars. If someone can't afford to pay their court debt, they risk additional financial penalties, contempt charges, driver's license suspension, arrest, and even jail. People living paycheck-to-paycheck are often trapped in an endless cycle of debt and punishment.

The harms caused by justice system fines and fees are widespread and stark. In a [2023 national survey](#), one in three people reported that they owed fines and fees in the previous ten years; 99% of people who owed fines and fees reported that court debt affected their daily lives; and over half of respondents who were parents of minor children had to reduce their spending on two or more basic needs in order to pay their debt. Fines and fees disproportionately impact communities of color² and [Black women](#) in particular, worsening [racial wealth disparities](#), and erecting [barriers to opportunity](#) and undermining the financial health

and security of our communities.

FFJC partners with state and local advocacy, grassroots and faith-based organizations, legislators, judges, public defenders, prosecutors, and law enforcement to advance reform throughout the country. We work principally through our leadership on two national campaigns: [Free to Drive](#), a nationwide campaign to end debt-based license restrictions; and [End Justice Fees](#), a national campaign dedicated to eliminating fees in the justice system. FFJC also works to advance reforms with local partners and through its leadership of [Cities and Counties for Fine and Fee Justice](#). FFJC staff also works in a series of “focus” states where they act as local leaders who build broad coalitions to advance the fine and fee reforms most critical to the community.

FFJC’s involvement in these reforms across the country included leading campaigns or coalitions directly or providing critical strategic and technical support to our community partners. FFJC’s contribution to these reforms included educating the public and policy makers about fines and fees; testifying in support of bills; participating in coalitions; reviewing or drafting legislation; providing research, communications, or fiscal technical assistance; and advising on campaign strategy. In every case, the partnership and expertise of local advocates, organizers, and directly impacted people was paramount to the success of the reform campaigns and the financial relief obtained.

When reforms pass, they bring financial relief to the individuals who owe court debt, their families and their communities. This relief helps stabilize families, address racial wealth disparities, and ensure that people do not have to choose between meeting basic needs like housing, food, and childcare or paying their fines and fees. The ripple effects of this relief also increase the financial well-being of local communities, local economies, and government tax collections.³

Personal Story: Frank M.

Frank M. is an advocate and paralegal who helped pass SB 88 in Nevada, which cancelled existing and future medical debt for those released from prison. Frank felt called to this advocacy because of his own experience: after spending nearly 18 years in prison, he owed thousands of dollars of medical debt when he was released. The bulk of this debt originated from an injury he sustained in prison – a broken wrist from a rough catch of a football. Though he only had three medical visits related to the injury, he was told he owed nearly \$7,000. When he was released, he received a letter informing him he had 30 days to pay the full \$7,000, or it would be sent to collections. Frank believes that this prison medical debt negatively affected his credit, and made re-entry more challenging.

“My medical debt was a black eye on my credit report. Even though I had savings and a job, I was turned away 10 out of 10 times for housing.”

- Frank M., Las Vegas, Nevada

This report estimates the **direct financial impact for individuals and families** of all FFJC-led or FFJC-supported fine and fee reforms measured across five areas of impact:

- fees people no longer need to pay
- fines that are no longer imposed
- earnings regained when a person gets their driver's license reinstated
- earnings people will not lose in the future due to a license suspension for unpaid court debt
- the forgiveness of outstanding fine and fee debt.

It does *not* include the additional impact this financial relief has on economies, government revenue, or other ancillary impacts individuals and communities may experience with the lifting of this debt burden. Although these are important subjects of study, they are not within the scope of this report. Our totals also exclude estimates for reforms where there is not available implementation data.

For these reasons and others described in this report, our estimates are conservative. They quantify the *minimum* financial relief that people feel as a result of fines and fee reforms advanced by FFJC and our partners. Even as a conservative estimate, the magnitude of relief is significant and illustrates the importance and benefits of reforming the harmful fine and fee practices of state and local governments.

Overview: The Financial Relief Impact of Fine and Fee Reform

We estimate that the reform to the 73 pieces of legislation that FFJC has led or supported since its founding have created **at least \$37.5 billion in total financial relief to impacted people and their families.**

The \$37.5 billion in financial relief obtained through these reforms could fundamentally change the lives of impacted people. For context, \$37.5 billion is enough to pay for a full year of groceries for roughly 3.1 million families—enough to feed nearly every family in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Antonio combined.⁴

For fines and fees that were eliminated or reduced, we calculated the annual impact of fines or fees that are no longer being charged.⁵ For driver's license suspension reforms, we calculated both the one-time impact for people who regained their licenses post-reform as well as the future impact for people who will no longer lose their licenses for

\$37.5 billion is enough to pay for a full year of groceries for roughly 3.1 million families—enough to feed nearly every family in Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Antonio combined.

Personal Story: Daquan N.

Daquan was released from prison in December 2015 and remained on parole until March 2023. While on parole, he had difficulties finding a job; it took him 8 months to secure one after his release. Money was a constant challenge. Daquan noted he often had to make sacrifices to pay his parole fees, including going without food. He shared that the system expects those returning home to pay their parole fees when they can barely afford a phone bill every month.

“I’m a human being, I’m not a neanderthal, I try to get by by paying. I want to make sure my credit is straight. Those things [not paying fees] could potentially impact your credit, or you getting a house, virtually anything, they all want your credit, and that can have an impact if you don’t pay. It was definitely something I thought about.”

-Daquan N., New York

Table 1: Total Financial Relief Estimates by Type of Reform

Type of Reform	Total Estimated Impact
End Justice Fees	\$84 million in costs prevented annually
Fine Reform	\$3 million in costs prevented annually
Free to Drive - Earnings Impact	\$15.1 billion in earnings regained for people regaining licenses
	\$19.2 billion in earnings retained for people who will not lose licenses in future years
Free to Drive - Reinstatement Fee Waiver Impact	\$431 million in reinstatement fees waived for people regaining licenses when the bill was enacted
	\$34 million in new reinstatement fees prevented annually
One-Time Debt Forgiven	\$2.6 billion of outstanding fine and fee debt discharged
Total Reform Impact Estimate	\$37.5 billion in financial relief

failure to pay court debt (FTP) or failure to appear (FTA) for a court hearing.⁶

This total financial relief, significantly understates the true impact to individuals and families. Approximately 28% of the legislation analyzed in this report could not be quantified due to limited or missing government data, meaning a substantial share of financial relief is entirely excluded from this estimate. Additionally, we consistently chose cautious approaches to our calculations. For example, when faced with conflicting data points, we always chose the most conservative number, leading to an undercount of the actual number of individuals impacted and the financial relief they obtained.⁷ The true total financial impact attributable to these reforms is, therefore, likely far higher than what is highlighted in Table 1.

The sections that follow explain each of the types of reform listed in Table 1 and outline how we calculated financial relief estimates for each of these reforms. The appendices also provide greater details on the methodology and sources of data.

Personal Story: Marquis H.

Marquis H. is a senior organizer with BUILD, where he supported the campaign to pass HB 531 in Maryland, legislation which eliminated parole supervision fees, alcohol and drug testing fees, and wiped out \$13.4 million in past debt. After navigating the bureaucracy of parole and supervision fees, he organized with BUILD, TurnAround Tuesday, community leaders and justice-impacted individuals to eliminate one of the many financial barriers imposed by the court system.

“One of the young women who worked with us, a leader advocating for the bill, she owed \$7,000 in back fees. Another gentleman had lifetime parole, which means he would pay the \$52 fee every single month for the rest of his life. Some people would be scared to go to parole because they didn’t have the money. So they would not report, which would lead to them getting a violation of parole. Once the bill was passed, it put some of those issues to rest.”

- Marquis H., Baltimore, Maryland

Impact Overview: End Justice Fees Campaign

The End Justice Fees campaign seeks to eliminate fees in the justice system. Of the 135 overall policy reforms analyzed in this report, 80 eliminated a fee, often eradicating more than one fee in a single reform. For example, in New Mexico, legislation championed by FFJC and our partners in 2023 eliminated 13 separate fees at once. **In total, fees attributable to the End Justice Fees campaign amounted to at least \$84 million in new fees prevented annually.**

Additionally, in many states, driver's license suspension reforms can often include license-related fee elimination. In Michigan, for example, legislation that eliminated driver's license suspensions for failure to pay court debt or failure to appear at a hearing also waived any license reinstatement fees.

The elimination of fees related to license reinstatement made up a significant portion of the overall fee elimination totals we examined in this report. Some reforms brought about one-time reinstatement fee relief by waiving the reinstatement fee for people who regained their licenses upon reform, and all reforms that included a repeal of failure-to-pay or failure-to-appear suspensions also prevented future reinstatement fees from being charged, since people would no longer lose their license. We estimate that these reforms **prevented \$431 million in one-time fees from being charged for people whose licenses were reinstated, and \$34 million in fees from being charged annually** due to the elimination of suspensions in future years.⁸

In total, fee elimination reforms – both those related to the End Justice Fees campaign and those associated with driver's license suspension reform – resulted in an estimated \$549.1 million in financial relief. For context, \$549.1 million could pay for a full year of rent for approximately 30,773 people.⁹

This quantifiable impact of fee reform is spread across 22 states and the District of Columbia. However, state or local fee elimination impact data was completely missing from 6 states, and was only partial in many of the others. This means our estimate is necessarily an undercount, given the full impact in those states could not be calculated.



Table 2: Types of Justice Fees Eliminated through the Reforms Analyzed in this Report

Court-Related Fees	Corrections/ Supervision-Related Fees	Traffic-Related Fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Public defender fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Probation fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parking fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DNA testing fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parole fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Traffic ticket fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warrant cancellation or “recall” fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay-to-stay fees (room & board fees, uniform fees, transportation fees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driver’s license reinstatement fees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warrant execution fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jail or prison phone call costs 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Payment plan fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees for medical services for incarcerated people 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Other post-adjudication fees (ie. booking fees, prosecution fees) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commissary cost markups 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Record expungement fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Electronic monitoring fees 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Late fees 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Diversion program fees 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fees charged for paying bail with a credit card 		

Personal Story: Troy W.

Troy was first incarcerated in New York in 1974 and later paroled in 1990. While on parole, he faced homelessness, anxiety, and PTSD. He found the parole fees burdensome while trying to afford a roof over his head. He recalled a period when he couldn’t afford an apartment and spent several years living in rooming houses or shelters. Troy is now retired and lives on his Social Security benefits. He says the elimination of parole fees in New York helps tremendously, as he likely wouldn’t be able to pay it with his current income. It has changed his experience on parole in a positive way.

“The relationship [with my parole officer] was draconian, in respect if you weren’t paying fees there was a certain stigma or look. The relationship was a little strained. Now it’s better.”

- Troy W., New York

Table 3: End Justice Fee Financial Relief Estimates, By State

State	End Justice Fees- Annual Costs Eliminated	Free to Drive- Reinstatement Fees Waived One-Time	Free to Drive- Reinstatement Fees Waived Annually	Total Impact
AL	<i>no data</i>			--
AZ		\$0.3M	<i>no data</i>	\$0.3M
CO		<i>n/a*</i>	\$9.5M	\$9.5M
DC		\$6.5M	<i>no data</i>	\$6.5M
DE	\$1.6M	<i>no data</i>	\$0.6M	\$2.3M
FL	\$11.1M			\$11.1M
HI		<i>n/a*</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
IL	\$4.0M	\$31.0M	<i>no data</i>	\$35.0M
KS	\$0.1M			\$0.1M
LA	<i>no data</i>			--
ME		<i>n/a*</i>	\$0.4M	\$0.4M
MD	\$1.3M	\$14.9M	\$0.5M	\$16.7M
MI	\$0.9M	\$43.6M	<i>no data</i>	\$44.5M
MN		<i>n/a*</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
MT		<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
NH	\$1.6M			\$1.6M
NJ	\$4.0M			\$4.0M
NM	\$16.8M	\$7.0M	\$1.8M	\$25.6M
NY	\$26.6M	\$217.0M	\$18.0M	\$261.6M
NV	\$7.4M	\$2.5M		\$9.9M
OH		\$8.4M	<i>no data</i>	\$8.4M
OK	\$3.3M			\$3.3M
OR		<i>n/a*</i>	\$2.7M	\$2.7M
PA	\$3.0M			\$3.0M
TX		<i>n/a*</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
UT		<i>n/a*</i>	\$0.4M	\$0.4M
VA		\$90.9M	<i>no data</i>	\$90.9M
WA	\$2.1M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$2.1M
WV		\$9.1M	<i>no data</i>	\$9.1M
Total	\$83.9M	\$431.2M	\$34.0M	\$549.1M

Blue cells indicate that this report does not analyze any reforms targeting this type of relief for this state.
**n/a* indicates that a reinstatement fee was not waived as part of driver's license suspension reform.

Table 3 details the impact by state and indicates where missing data prevented us from calculating an impact estimate. For details on the specific reforms by state, see the appendix at the end of this report.

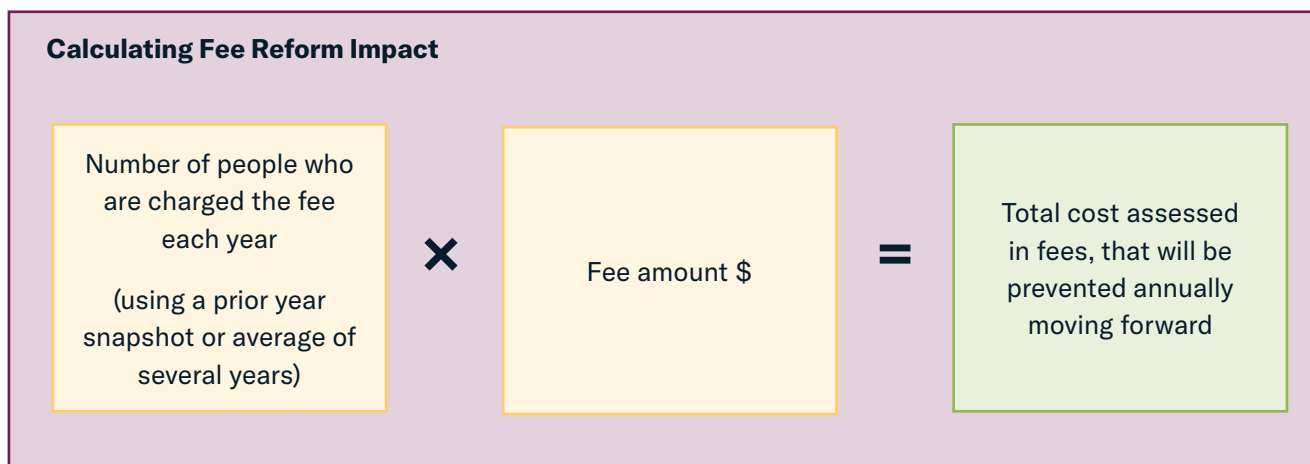
Methodology of Calculating Fee Reform Impacts

To measure the impact of these fee elimination reforms, we estimated the annual amount that is no longer charged due to the eradicated fees and then estimated the number of people who are no longer subjected to the fees. To identify data for our calculations, we relied first on government sources, such as legislative reports or fiscal notes, and then on published academic papers, media reports citing government data, or other published reports. Specific sources, assumptions, and formulas for each reform are detailed in the appendix of this report.

To fully capture the financial impact in future years of people not having to pay the eliminated fees, we estimated how much in fees would no longer be assessed in the year following reform. Although there is certainly an impact in subsequent years, we did not calculate a multi-year impact of fee elimination. The varying types of reforms made a consistently reliable duration of compounded impact difficult to determine. This approach again likely undercounts the overall impact of reform. The formula we used to calculate this future impact estimate is:

For example, to calculate the annual impact of eliminating fees charged to people who are incarcerated in jails, we generally used the [Jail Data Initiative's](#) average daily jail population estimate from a recent year as a proxy for the number of people who would be charged the fee in the year after reform, had the fee not been eliminated.¹⁰

Where we did not have sufficient assessment data, we looked at data on the amount of fees *collected* annually. Collections data (the number of people who pay and how much they pay) is not an equal proxy for assessment numbers because all those who are assessed a fee do not have the ability to pay it. Using collections data will inevitably result in an undercount of the number of people impacted by the reform. Sometimes, we used collection figures provided by a government source, like a fiscal note. Other times, we reached an estimate by multiplying the *annual population who pays the fee*¹¹ by the *fee amount*. Due to data limitations, we had to use collections data instead of assessment data for nearly a third (30%) of all End Justice Fee bills.



Impact Overview: Fines Reform

Of the 73 pieces of legislation analyzed in this report, two directly reformed fine policies:

- *Wilmington, Delaware* reduced local parking tickets from \$40 to \$25 if paid within 14 days. Wilmington's [FY2024 Budget](#) revenue documents projected that this change would **prevent the extraction of \$535,000 from households annually**.
- *Buffalo, New York*: passed a [resolution](#) in 2021 to eliminate school zone speed cameras in up to twenty school zones, and replace them with traffic calming measures like speed bumps. Due to the reform, drivers no longer run the risk of incurring \$50 tickets, and the law called for drivers who had received tickets in the 90 days prior to the resolution's passage to be reimbursed. A City [impact evaluation](#) of the speed camera program showed that the Buffalo Parking Violations Bureau issued 24,011 speed camera citations in the first year that the program was implemented (March 2020 - March 2021), each of which carried a \$50 fine. Assuming that number would have been similar in future years, this means the reform **prevented approximately \$2,429,450 in fine assessments annually** (using the calculation [48,589 tickets] X [\$50 fine per ticket]).

We estimated that the combined financial relief from these reforms **prevents at least \$3 million from being charged to drivers annually**. Though this represents only a small portion of the total relief estimated in this report, it nonetheless represents important policy changes to make fines more equitable and ensure they are not used to raise government revenue.



Impact Overview: Free to Drive Campaign

Founded in 2019, the Free to Drive Campaign seeks to end restrictions on driving privileges that stem from outstanding fines or fees (Failure to Pay, or FTP), or missed court appearances at debt-related hearings (Failure to Appear, or FTA), which often are related to a person's inability to pay. For millions of Americans, driver's licenses are a critical part of life. Without a license, particularly in suburban and rural communities, people cannot get to their jobs, take their children to school, buy groceries, or access the healthcare they need. According to the [U.S. Census Bureau](#), almost 70% of Americans reported driving as their primary mode of transportation to and from work in 2024, whereas only 3.7% used public transportation. Many jobs also require a valid driver's license as a condition of employment. The relationship between a driver's license and an individual's financial stability cannot be overstated.

Research shows that when someone's driver's license is suspended, on average, [they lose \\$12,700 per year in earnings](#),¹² with the average suspension lasting approximately 5.8 years.¹³ Therefore, when assessing the impact of driver's license suspension (DLS) reform, we can look at the impact on wages in two ways:

- how much a person might expect to *regain* in wages once their suspension is lifted; and
- how much in wages others *will never lose* (i.e., wages people will keep in their pockets), once debt-based license suspension is eliminated.

As explained in the section on fee elimination, a third potential impact comes from the waiver of reinstatement fees, which is often a part of reform legislation. Collectively, these effects are the basis for our estimates of the financial impact that Free to Drive reforms have on people.

The analysis in our report includes information for 23 states and the District of Columbia that have passed reforms to curb debt-based driving restrictions that FFJC led or supported through the Free to Drive campaign. There are two groups of people who are likely to see wage impacts from DLS reform: (1) those who regain their licenses due to the reform and (2) those who never lose it in future years because of the reform.

Unfortunately, many places lack data on the number of licenses suspended or fully reinstated, both pre- and post-reform. However, 18 states and the District of Columbia, had sufficient data to allow us to estimate the financial impact of reform. As of December 2025, approximately 1.7 million people in those states had their licenses reinstated due to reform and likely experienced **at least \$15.1 billion in regained earnings**.¹⁴ Because reinstatement fees were often waived for those regaining their licenses, these reforms likely also led to an estimated \$431 million in prevented costs, bringing the overall driver's license suspension reform impact to an estimated **\$15.6 billion**. For context, \$15.6 billion is enough to pay for a 4-year public university education for more than 326,000 people.¹⁵

These approximately 1.7 million people who regained their authorization to drive represent about 15% of the approximately [11 million](#) people estimated to have lost their driver's licenses due to unpaid fines and fees as of 2021 – a number that is likely an undercount given data limitations. Even so, the amount of regained earnings that we estimate this population to have received is significant, and would be enormous if every state ended FTP and FTA suspensions.

For the thousands of people who avoid new driver's license suspensions each year following reform, we use a different approach to the calculations. Based on prior statutory requirements and enforcement practices, we can assume, absent reform, that

these individuals' licenses would otherwise have been suspended, exposing them to the risk of wage loss tied to reduced access to work. For purposes of calculating future earnings that will no longer be lost because of driver's license suspensions, we assumed that the same number of people would have been suspended in future years as were suspended in the most recent prior year for which we have data, and that their licenses would remain suspended for 5.8 years (the average length of a suspension). We can estimate that **the total amount of lost wages these reforms prevented is at least \$19.2 billion**. These reforms **also prevented approximately \$34 million in estimated future reinstatement fees annually**. Table 4 shows this impact by state, where we had sufficient data to calculate an estimate.

Personal Story: Teon S.

Teon S. is a single mother of six, who has been caught in the cycle of driver's license suspensions and court debt in Alabama for over six years. It all began with a traffic stop. The police officer initially pulled her over for what appeared to be a broken headlight, but tacked on an additional fine for a wrong-sized booster seat in which her six-year-old was sitting. These fines ballooned with court fees, and though she tried her hardest, Teon missed a couple of monthly payments. Soon enough, her driver's license was suspended. The suspension had negative consequences not only on her employment, but also on her family ties and her children's health.

"After my license was suspended, I was afraid I would get stopped and arrested. I stopped driving out of fear. My children missed doctors' appointments and we would walk miles to get groceries, all because I was afraid of getting pulled over and getting another ticket."

- Teon S., Montgomery, Alabama



Table 4: Financial Relief Impact Estimates of Free to Drive reforms, by State

State	Earnings expected to be regained in the first year of reform by those who get their license restored	Reinstatement fee costs prevented in the first year of reform by those who get their license restored	Future wage earnings over 5.8 years that will not be lost due to new suspensions	Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually in future years	Total Impact
AR	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
AZ	\$249.2M	\$0.3M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$249.5M
CA	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
CO	<i>no data</i>	<i>n/a*</i>	\$2.5B	\$9.5M	\$2.5B
DC	\$530.0M	\$6.5M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$536.4M
DE	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$326.7M	\$0.6M	\$327.3M
HI	<i>no data</i>	<i>n/a*</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
IL	\$1.9B	\$31.0M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$1.9B
IN	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
ME	<i>reform not retroactive</i>	<i>n/a*</i>	\$190.5M	\$0.4M	\$190.9M
MD	\$738.6M	\$14.9M	\$427.2M	\$0.5M	\$1.2B
MI	\$1.2B	\$43.6M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$1.3B
MN	\$35.7M	<i>n/a*</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$35.7M
MT	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
NM	\$1.2B	\$7.0M	\$4.8B	\$1.8M	\$5.9B
NY	<i>no data</i>	\$217.0M	\$9.3B	\$18.0M	\$9.6B
NV	\$265.3M	\$2.5M	<i>reform was time-limited**</i>	<i>reform was time-limited**</i>	\$267.8M
OH	\$252.7M	\$8.4M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$261.1M
OR	\$80.0M	<i>n/a*</i>	\$819.9M	\$2.7M	\$902.7M
TX	\$5.1B	<i>n/a*</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$5.1B
UT	<i>reform not retroactive</i>	<i>n/a*</i>	\$782.6M	\$0.4M	\$783.1M
VA	\$2.8B	\$90.9M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$2.9B
WA	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	--
WV	\$801.1M	\$9.1M	<i>no data</i>	<i>no data</i>	\$810.2M
Total	\$15.1B	\$431.2M	\$19.2B	\$34.0M	\$34.8B

*n/a indicates that a reinstatement fee was not waived as part of driver’s license suspension reform.

**In Nevada, a separate piece of legislation included language that effectively allowed FTP suspension practices to resume in 2023. This has limited the annual impact the reform legislation has for Nevada drivers, and so we do not include impact estimates here for annual earnings kept in future years.

Personal Story: Mona S.

Mona S. is a New Mexico advocate, direct service provider, and member of FFJC's Community Advisory Board. Mona's path to advocacy originates from an [\\$80 traffic ticket](#) – one she was unable to pay while juggling the responsibilities of caring for her children and her elderly father. She only learned her driver's license had been suspended for failure to pay that debt when she was pulled over by police. And although her driver's license had been suspended, her daily responsibilities hadn't – she still had to pick up her children, take care of her father, go to work, and make payments on her court debt.

This experience led Mona to testify in favor of Senate Bill 47, New Mexico's legislation that ended the suspension of driver's licenses due to failure-to-pay court fees and failure-to-appear in court. Her story is depicted in the short documentary, [Road to Reform: New Mexico](#), where she describes the personal agency of being able to drive again.

"I feel empowered. The weight of not having to look over my shoulders anymore, and not have to worry about getting pulled over. Freeing, it feels freeing."

- Mona S., Sante Fe, New Mexico

As is seen in Table 4, we sometimes lacked data to calculate any of the fiscal impacts of a bill, and we often did not have data for both current and future impacts. This lack of data obscures the full impact picture, and we can, therefore, confidently state that drivers have ultimately kept billions of dollars more than the totals calculated here.¹⁶



Methodology for Calculating Driver’s License Suspension Reform Impacts

We analyzed driver’s license suspension reforms passed in the 23 states and the District of Columbia where we had sufficient data. These reforms targeted driver’s license suspensions for failure to pay (FTP) or failure to appear in court (FTA), or both. Importantly, a [2025 white paper](#) analyzed the impacts of state driver’s license suspension reform on employment rates, and concluded that the scope and comprehensiveness of the reform and implementation was significant in determining the extent of positive impact.

We saw evidence of this in our analysis; not all reforms automatically resulted in the actual reinstatement of all suspended licenses.¹⁷ Table 5 illustrates the comprehensiveness of each reform analyzed in this report. Reforms varied widely in scope and were often constrained by partial reforms and implementation barriers. To account for partial adoption, we applied several “uptake gaps,” or standard estimates of the share of the eligible population likely to experience relief, ensuring that financial impacts are not overstated in any state.

Our analysis of Free to Drive reforms covered two types of reform efforts:

1. *Retroactive reforms*, those impacting people who had suspensions for FTA or FTP at the time of the reform effort and who had their licenses reinstated as a result of the reform implementation;
2. *Prospective reforms*, those impacting a future population of individuals who would have otherwise had their license suspended due to FTA or FTP but will not experience suspensions due to the reform.

All DLS reforms are prospective because they eliminate the ability to suspend, at least in certain circumstances, but not all reforms are retroactive. Where relevant, we also calculated the financial impact of one-time reinstatement fees waived retroactively or future reinstatement fees no longer assessed moving forward.

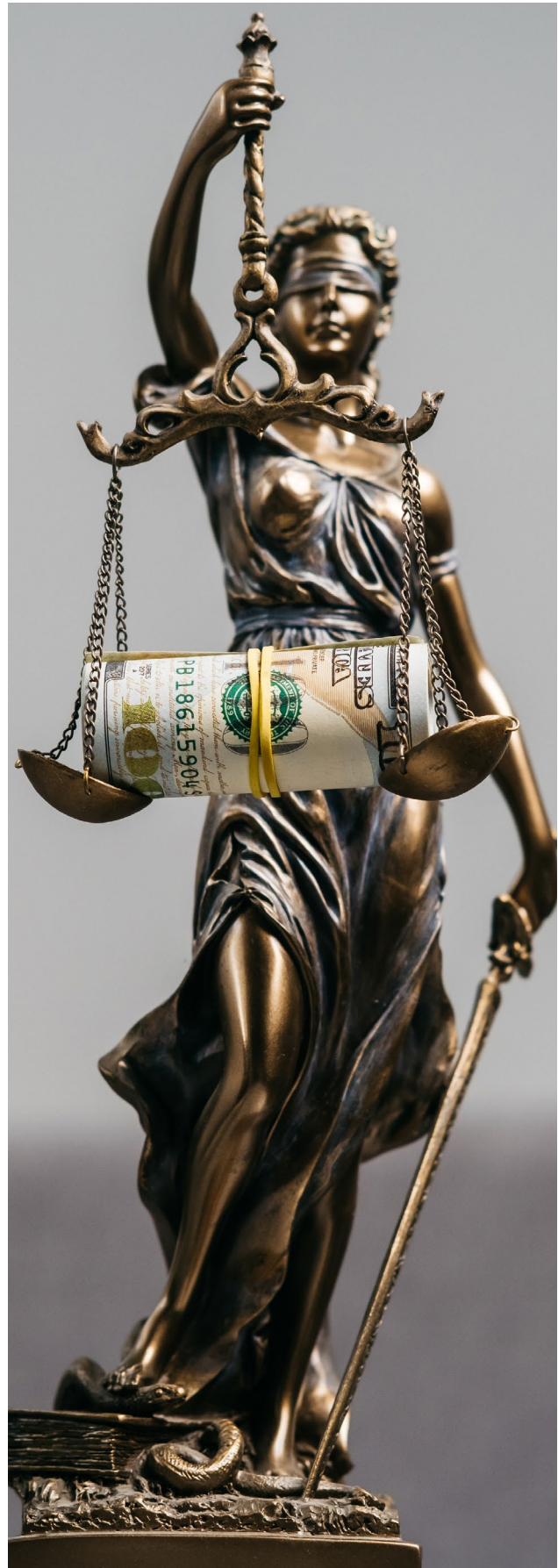


Table 5: Characteristics of Free to Drive Reforms For Which We Have Impact Data

State	FTA	FTP	Retroactive	Automatic	Fee Waiver
AZ	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
CO	yes	yes	yes	no	no
DC*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
DE	no	yes	yes	no	yes
IL*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
ME	yes	no	no	no	yes
MD	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
MI*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
MN	yes	yes	no	no	no
NM*	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
NY	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
NV	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
OH	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
OR	no	yes	no	no	no
TX	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
UT	yes	yes	no	no	yes
VA	no	yes	yes	yes	yes
WA	yes	no	yes	yes	yes
WV (2020)	yes	yes	yes	no	no
WV (2022)	yes	no	yes	no	yes

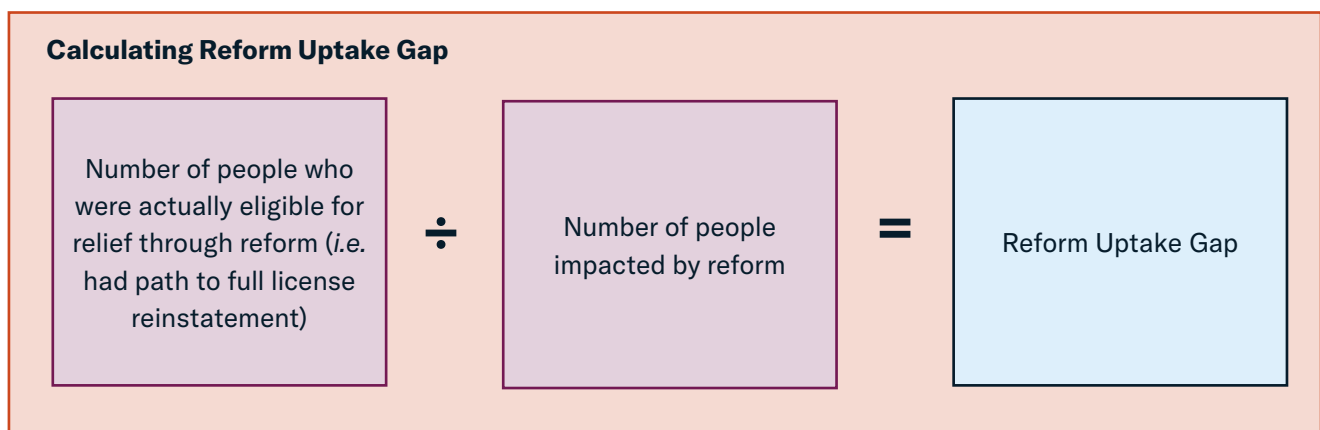
*Rows highlighted in green denote states where FFJC considered reforms to be comprehensive - i.e., all five kinds of positive reform took place

Calculating Uptake Gaps to Guard against Overestimation

To arrive at our estimates and to maintain consistency with [prior literature](#), we incorporated up to three “uptake gaps” into our formulas, depending on the circumstances. These uptake gaps are mathematical constants we used in our formulas to reflect practical realities of implementation and to ensure that our calculations represent the lower-end, or a more restrained estimate of, the total potential financial impact of driver’s license suspension reforms.

Reform Uptake Gap: 55.3%

For many of these reforms, just because someone’s suspended license was impacted by the reform, it does not mean that the license was actually reinstated and the person was able to legally drive again. Several barriers may still persist. A person may be required to reapply for their license, take an exam, or pay hefty reinstatement fees, or their license may also be suspended for reasons other than FTP or FTA, such as a criminal conviction or unpaid child support. To account for these issues and to avoid overinflating our estimates, we incorporated a reform uptake gap, calculated by:



We have both of these data points for the reforms implemented in California,¹⁸ Michigan, New York, Ohio, Texas, and the District of Columbia, and found that across these five jurisdictions, an average of 55.3% of people actually had their licenses restored post-reform. This average became our “reform uptake gap,” which we used in other states to estimate the number of people whose licenses were likely reinstated if the reform was not automatic, or if a person’s license remained suspended post-reform due to other reasons.

Regained Earnings Uptake Gap: 63.3%

To understand the impact of driver's license suspensions on each driver's earnings, we relied on previous [research](#), estimating that the loss of a driver's license resulted in an average corresponding loss of \$12,700 in wages each year the person's license is suspended. However, estimates of what a person may lose in wages as the result of a lost job, or a transition to a lower-paying one, are *not necessarily equal to what a person will regain in wages* once a suspension is lifted. Lifting the suspension does not mean a person gets their old, higher-paying job back. Therefore, we had to develop an uptake gap that accounted for the difference in regained earnings.

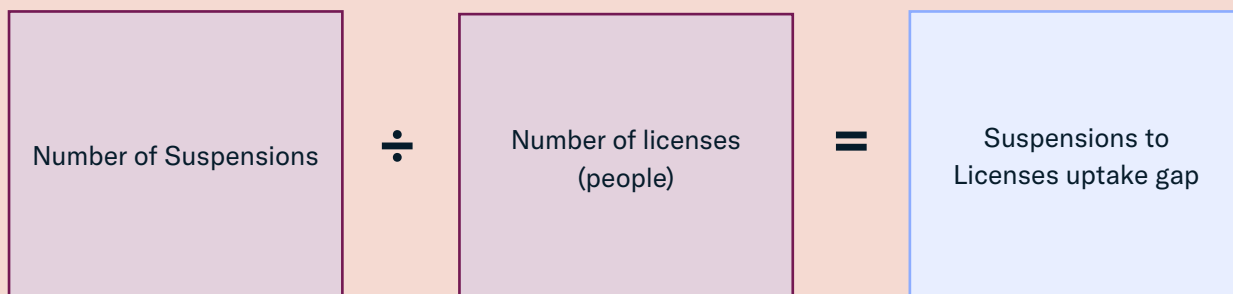
Current research literature lacks any national estimates for this particular gap, but there is research comparing pre- and post-incarceration wages, which we used to create this uptake gap. Although license suspension and incarceration are not equal punishments, there are similarities in racial disparities and loss of access to employment. Moreover, the average length of a license suspension actually exceeds the average period of incarceration in a state prison.¹⁹ Based on the collective literature, we estimated that people who regain their licenses will likely regain 63.3% of their \$12,700 in lost wages in the years following reform.²⁰

Suspensions-to-People Uptake Gap: 2.9

In the data on DLS reform, the number of *people* impacted by a suspension or its reform can be very different from the total number of *suspensions* recorded in state datasets. One person's license can be suspended for multiple reasons at any given time, each of which is counted separately in the data. Because we focused on calculating the impact on individuals, translating suspensions into drivers was important when we did not already have the specific number of affected drivers. For six of the reforms analyzed in this report,²¹ we knew *both* the number of suspensions impacted and the unique number of people (or licenses) impacted. For these six states, we calculated the suspensions-to-people uptake gap by dividing the number of total suspensions impacted by the number of individual licenses impacted,²² and took the average of all six ratios to calculate a constant ratio of 2.9.

We applied the suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap to other states when the only available data was the number of annual suspensions for FTA or FTP. In these cases, we divided the number of suspensions reported by 2.9 to get the corresponding estimated number of licenses (or people) impacted.

Calculating Suspensions-to-Licenses Uptake Gap

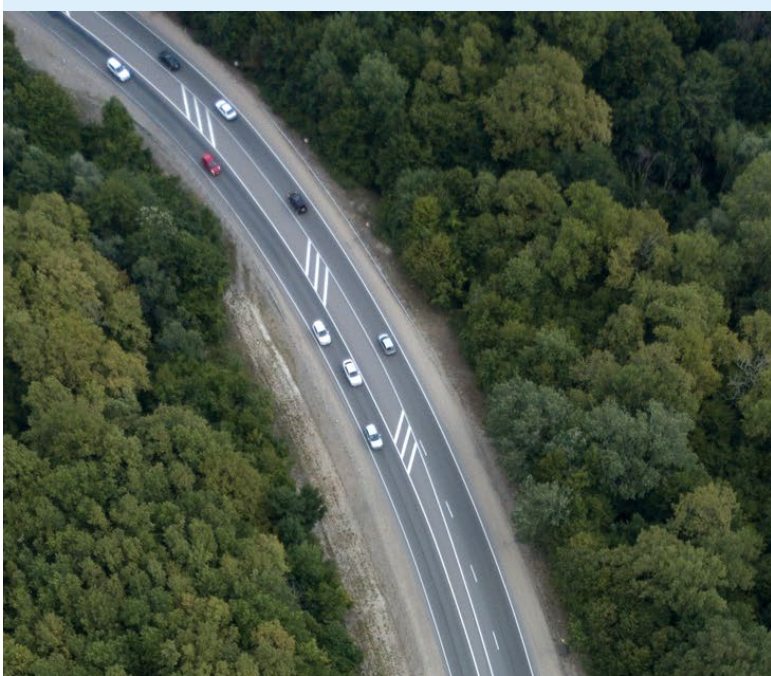


Formulas for Calculating DLS Reform Impacts

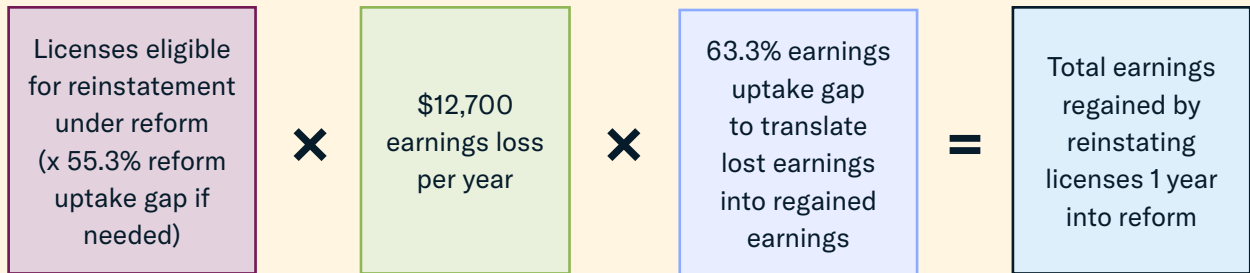
Depending on the type of DLS reform and the data we had available, FFJC’s team developed a series of formulas that could be employed to monetize the impact of each reform.

Earnings Impact Estimates:

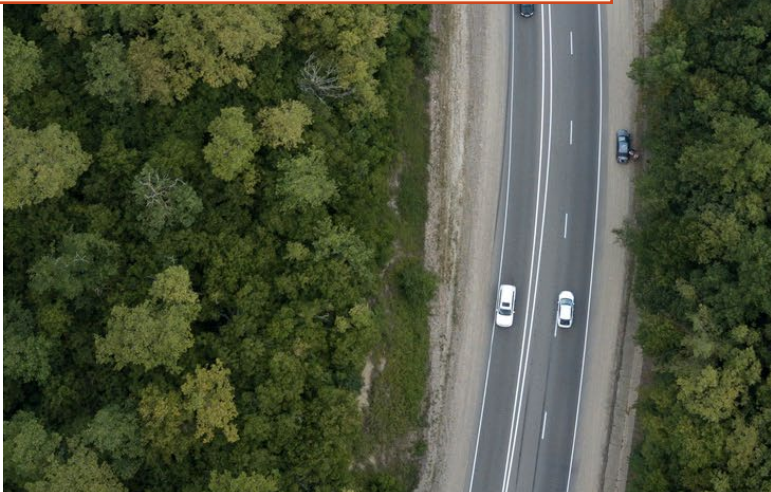
When the reforms resulted in people regaining their licenses, we estimated the increase in earnings for individuals in the first year after having their licenses restored, using the following formula:



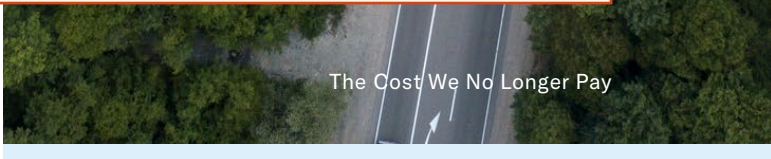
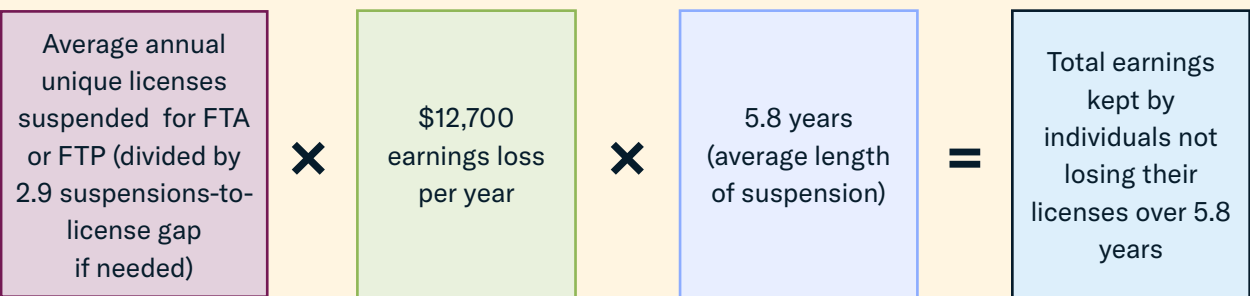
Estimating Earnings Regained



To measure the future impact on people who will not lose their licenses after reform (i.e. the earnings people will keep in their pockets due to the reform), we first multiplied an annual snapshot of how many people had their licenses suspended before the reform by \$12,700 (the average impact of a suspension on yearly earnings loss). Then, we multiplied that number by 5.8 years (the lower range of what research tells us is the average length of suspension). Thus, we estimated earnings that will not be lost using the following formula:



Estimating Earnings Not Lost



Reinstatement Fee Waivers:

DLS reform can also bring fee relief by waiving hefty reinstatement fees. In addition to estimating the impact of reform efforts on wages, we calculated *one-time reinstatement fee relief* for people who regained their licenses upon reform, and *reinstatement fees prevented in future years due to reform*. In some states, a fiscal note or some other government document estimated the “cost” of the reform in terms of money that would no longer be collected from people for reinstatement fees. Where available, we simply used this estimate as a proxy for the fee savings to people.

When the state did not make its own estimate, we created a formula to calculate the impact.

This formula assumes people had to pay a reinstatement fee for every suspension if there were multiple active suspensions on their record, which to the best of our knowledge appears to have been the standard practice in the states we analyzed. Therefore, no uptake gap is required to calculate this number. We used the following formula to calculate reinstatement fees prevented:

Value of Reinstatement Fees Prevented

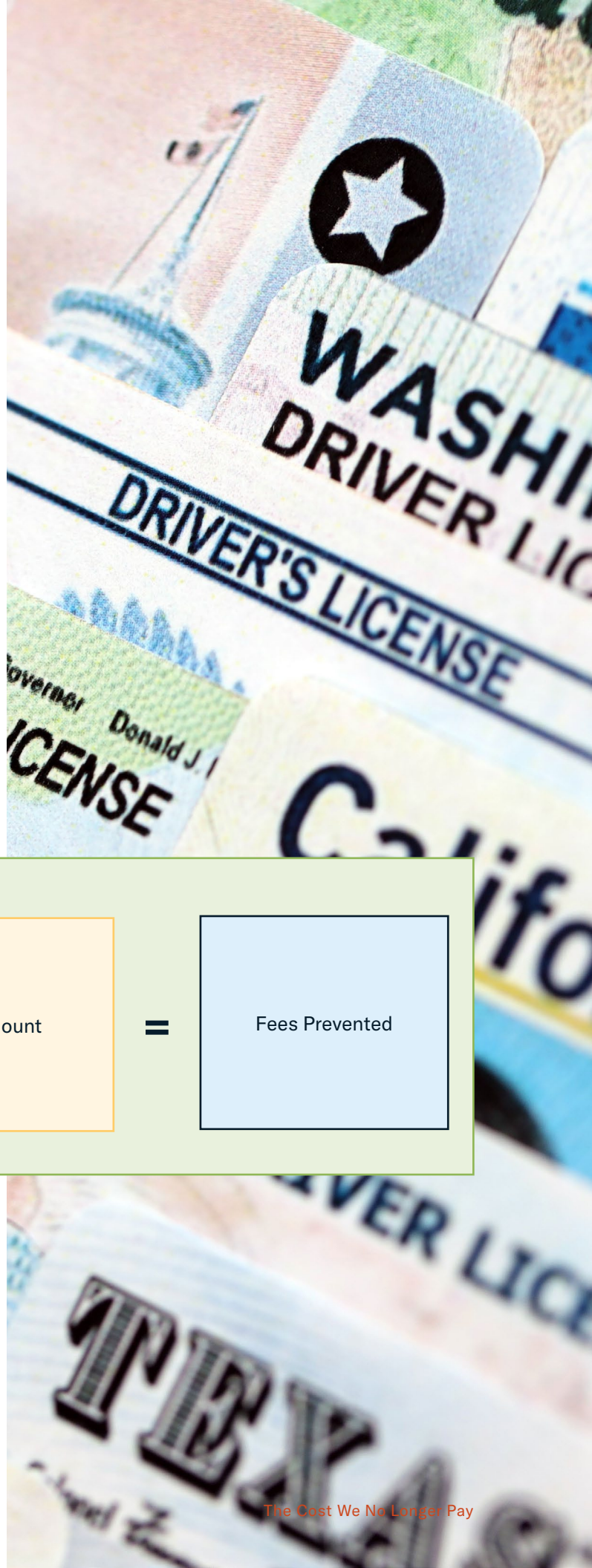
Number of suspensions impacted by reform

×

Fee amount

=

Fees Prevented



Impact Overview: Outstanding Debt Discharged

In ten different reforms across eight states, the reform implementation also included discharging outstanding debt resulting from the old policy. Debt waiver dramatically increases the total financial relief to people who owe fines and fees. **The total amount of debt discharged by these reforms was at least \$2.6 billion dollars.** Table 6 shows the breakdown of that estimated financial relief by state and associated reform.

Table 6: Outstanding Debt Discharged in Fine and Fee Reforms		
State	Underlying Reform	Outstanding Debt Discharged
Delaware	Probation Fee Elimination	\$14.4 million
	Interstate Compact Fee Elimination	\$39 thousand
Florida	Miami-Dade Jail Subsistence and Other Fees Elimination	\$96 million
Maryland	Parole Supervision Fee Elimination	\$13.4 million
Nevada	Waiving Medical Debt Upon Release from State Prisons	\$12.6 million
	Warrant Fees Elimination for Decriminalized Infractions	\$10.6 million
Oregon	Failure to Pay Driver's License Suspension Repeal (discharge of underlying fines and fees related to suspensions)	at least \$7.8 million
New Hampshire	Public Counsel Fee Elimination	unknown
New Jersey	Public Counsel Fee Elimination	unknown
Texas	Failure to Pay Driver's License Suspension Repeal (discharge of underlying fines and fees related to suspensions)	\$2.5 billion
Total Outstanding Debt Discharged		At least \$2.6 billion

Table 6 demonstrates that discharging outstanding fine and fee debt can be hugely impactful. It is also often administratively simple, as all old debt can essentially be eliminated in one action. Because, in many cases, budgets are already anticipating that much of this money is uncollectable, discharging fine and fee debt often does not have any fiscal impact for government (*i.e.* no revenue is lost that would require other sources of revenue to fill). Though it does not solve the systemic problem of using fines and fees to generate revenue, discharging older, previously unpaid court debt can provide a fresh start for individuals facing financial hardship.

Impact Overview: Miscellaneous Reforms

In addition to the Free to Drive campaign reforms, End Justice Fees campaign reforms, or fine reforms detailed in this report, FFJC has helped advance several other miscellaneous procedural fine and fee reforms, including:

- Standardizing payment plan access across states and capping monthly payments (Florida, New York);
- Expanding access to alternative ways of addressing fines and fees through expanding definitions of community service and reducing costly jail stays related to debt (New Mexico);
- Establishing more affordable and flexible monthly payment plans for people who owe fines, fees, and forfeitures (Virginia); and
- Establishing a restitution fund to provide restitution payments on behalf of youth who cannot afford to pay their financial obligations (King County, Washington).

We did not calculate impact estimates for these reforms due to insufficient data, but the significance and scope of these reforms is nonetheless important to capture. These incremental reforms make it easier for justice-involved people to address their outstanding debt.

For more details on each of the “miscellaneous” reforms, see the Appendix B.

Even Without a Known Financial Impact, Reforms Still Matter

Our choices to be conservative in our calculations means that our total impact estimate significantly undercounts the true financial relief for individuals and families—likely by billions of dollars. Examples of reforms for which we do not include an impact estimate in this report, but which undoubtedly made a significant impact for impacted people, include:

- **Washington driver's license suspension reform:** 100,000 drivers with FTP or FTA suspensions were estimated to have regained their license through a court ruling that paralleled the passage of legislation reforming driver's license suspension practices. FFJC was not directly involved in the court litigation and the timing made it difficult to separately quantify what impacts were the result of the ruling and what was the result of the legislation once it was implemented. So, we did not include the earnings impact for these drivers in our totals. Nonetheless, the complete end to driver license suspensions for FTA and FTP would certainly have made a significant impact on impacted drivers in that state.
- **Texas driver's license suspension reform:** [HB 2048](#) repealed FTP suspensions for debt related to certain traffic-related offenses. Insufficient data existed to estimate how many people would avoid suspensions in future years and therefore avoid earnings losses, but we were able to estimate that people regaining their licenses upon the passage of reform felt financial relief (*i.e.*, regained earnings, debt waived, and elimination of reinstatement fees) of \$7.7 billion dollars. Imagine how many billions more in retained earnings and reinstatement fee relief drivers have felt in the years since reform.

Greater details on these and other reforms that could not be sufficiently quantified are available in Appendix B.

Implications of Fine and Fees Impact Estimates

This report serves the dual purpose of shining a light on the significant direct financial relief that fine and fee reforms provide for people and offering a toolkit with template formulas and examples to help governments and advocates quantify the impacts of past reform or the possible impact of future reform in their own jurisdictions.

After conducting this impact analysis, several implications from our findings stand out:

\$37.5 billion dollars is both a significant amount of direct financial relief and a vast undercount of the true impact for individuals and families of fine and fee reforms. For example, of the 28 jurisdictions that passed driver's license suspension reforms, we did not calculate any earnings impact in five²³ due to: (1) a lack of precise data on how many people were impacted; (2) a high level of discretion in implementation (*i.e.* judicial discretion to waive suspensions) making predictability difficult; or (3) remaining barriers preventing impacted people from reinstating their licenses. Additionally, we often found only enough data to calculate *either* retroactive *or* future (prospective) impact for a given driver's license suspension reform, giving us an incomplete picture of relief. With better data, the overall quantifiable impacts would be vastly greater; we simply could not reliably measure them beyond what is outlined in this report.

In addition, the scope of this report did not allow for analysis on the indirect individual benefits to impacted people and their families, such as improved credit (and resulting increased access to loans to procure a car, education or housing), the ability to build wealth, improved physical and mental health, etc. Nor could this report explore the broader benefits to governments that result from fine and fee reform, such as increased economic activity in low-income communities; decreased costs of collection for governments;²⁴ higher sales, income, and gas taxes leading to increased government revenue, some of which is captured by other research; or, increased economic activity

as a result of increased employment. For example, [research in Alabama](#) estimated that for each fine- or fee-related driver's license suspension, the state loses \$140 per year in gas tax revenue. If those licenses are no longer suspended, states could expect to see increased taxes collected without making any changes to local or state tax policy. Additionally, research has found that comprehensive driver's license suspension reform is correlated with an [average statewide employment increase of 1.3%](#), which brings significant economic benefits for local economies and government coffers. The impact of these ripple effects are certainly substantial and merit further study.

Because of all these factors, the magnitude of relief due to fine and fee reform is far more than what is calculated here. These findings underscore the need for better government tracking and reporting on both the current imposition and collection of fines and fees, as well as on implementation of any related reforms, which ideally should be required and resourced in reform legislation. Without that comprehensive data, policymakers cannot fully understand the implications that eliminating justice system fines and fees have for people, communities, and governments.

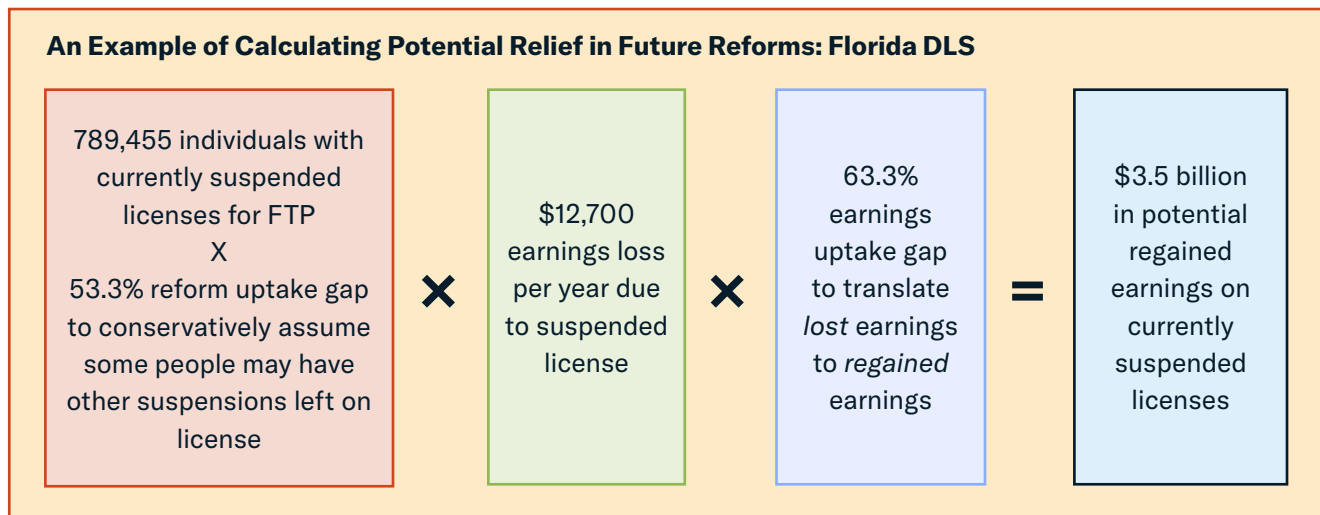
Discharging one-time debt creates significant financial relief in and of itself. The fact that just eight reforms across six states lifted \$2.6 billion²⁵ in outstanding fine and fee debt is staggering. When people cannot pay what they owe, debt can accumulate quickly through additional fees and can have devastating financial and punitive consequences. Those with outstanding debt may experience lower credit scores, be forced into prolonged engagement with courts through mandated supervision periods, become less able to afford basic needs like rent or healthcare, or live under risk of arrest or incarceration due to the [debt owed](#). Discharging one-time debt provides a fresh start for individuals who may already be facing financial hardship and increases people's economic stability and mobility. For governments, this often comes at no cost or revenue loss, because the debt was unlikely to be collected in the first place. Whether as a standalone reform or as a part of comprehensive fee reform legislation, discharging

outstanding debt represents a tangible benefit for governments and for the people and families for whom the debt is lifted.

The formulas and assumptions in this analysis are customizable. Policymakers and advocates can use the formulas and assumptions offered in this analysis to better understand what the direct impact of future reform might look like for their own jurisdictions. This can help lawmakers and policymakers understand the benefits of reforms they are considering. Even if a potential reform comes with a costly fiscal note, the scale of the benefit to constituents must also factor into the decision-making process.

As an example, we can look at Florida, which still suspends drivers licenses for both Failure to Pay (FTP) and Failure to Appear (FTA). According to the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, as of November 2025 there were 789,455 individuals with suspended licenses for FTP alone. We can use our “regained earnings formula” to illustrate how much in regained earnings Floridians might see if the state were to end the practice of suspending licenses, even just for FTP, and if the state automatically lifted outstanding suspensions.

Even when we apply our reform uptake gap in this calculation, we estimate that FTP reform could lead to billions in regained earnings for people in Florida. Going forward, DLS reform in Florida would continue to have a compounding impact. Future suspensions would be avoided, which would prevent millions more in lost wages annually. Moreover, as that financial benefit to people ripples through local communities and economies, it seems certain that state and local governments would see significant revenue increases through higher sales tax and gas tax collections. That is a net fiscal win for all. We hope that advocates and legislators will similarly use this report to illustrate the potential benefits of implementing fine and fee reforms in their state and local governments.



Conclusion

The fine and fee reforms led or supported by FFJC since its founding have resulted in measurable and significant financial relief for millions of people. Although the calculations documented in this report unquestionably underestimate the magnitude of the financial relief provided, this relief is meaningful. By keeping money at home and in communities, and by erasing debt that has likely burdened individuals for years, these policy reforms are, from all perspectives, changes worth making.

The appendices that follow this report detail the calculations, data, and assumptions we used to estimate the financial impact for each reform included in our analysis.



Appendix A: Full Methodology

Data Sources

In this report, we comprehensively examined the financial impact of FFJC-supported reform efforts across the United States, from April 2018 to December 2025. Specifically, our analysis quantifies the economic benefits felt by individuals and families as a result of fine and fee reform. To conduct our analysis, we compiled data points from multiple sources, including:

- Official public records requests for data at the state and local level;
- Published or publicly available government documents (*i.e.*, fiscal notes, budgets, reports, etc.);
- News articles citing government data;
- Direct contact with local and state advocates;
- Academic papers citing government data; and
- Other sources (*i.e.*, previously fulfilled open records requests, policy reports published by other organizations, etc.).

Where possible, we prioritized data points from official public records requests, government publications, fiscal notes, and academic research papers that used data provided directly by government agencies. While administrative datasets would provide the most comprehensive data, such data are rarely publicly accessible or consistently maintained across jurisdictions. Our multi-source approach allowed us to calculate impact estimates across diverse jurisdictions.

Analysis Procedures

End Justice Fees Campaign

For fee reforms categorized under the End Justice Fees campaign, our formulas varied based on data availability. For fees imposed on people who are incarcerated, we use either the annual average daily population in the year of implementation or a monthly data point from a public research database (*i.e.*, [Jail Data Initiative](#)). For reforms that eliminated the cost of making phone calls from jails or prisons, we assumed that each person incarcerated (*i.e.*, the average daily population) used the phone for a certain average call time per day, as reported by a government or reputable news source in that jurisdiction.

Free to Drive Campaign

Before formal data analysis began, FFJC's research team and Dr. Marshall L. White collaborated to standardize the formulas used in the analysis and to validate the key assumptions underlying our analysis. We operationalized key metrics and standardized how key data points would be used within our formulas.

These preliminary decisions ensured the consistent application of formulas and uptake gaps across different reform types and jurisdictions. We revisited these choices throughout the analysis as data anomalies or challenges appeared and made adjustments if circumstances required. When adjustments to formulas occurred, we recalculated all reforms that would have been affected by that adjustment to ensure consistency. Key metrics used in our analysis include:

\$12,700 in lost annual earnings

- **What it represents:** the average annual per person wages lost due to driver's license suspension for failure to appear or failure to pay.
- **When we use it:** to calculate earnings regained or earnings kept due to driver's license suspension reform.
- **Where it came from:** Our analysis of driver's license reinstatement reforms relies on the \$12,700 earnings loss figure as a national average for individuals who have suspended licenses for failure to appear in court or failure to pay, which comes from a [study](#) by Chien et al (2022). At the time of this data analysis, we consider this figure to be the best available estimate using rigorous methods to calculate annual earnings lost due to driver's license suspension for failure to appear in court or failure to pay across jurisdictions.

5.8 years

- **What it represents:** the estimated average length of suspension for failure to appear or failure to pay.
- **When we use it:** to calculate earnings kept (*i.e.*, lost wages prevented) due to driver's license suspension reform, over the lifetime of reform.
- **Where it came from:** A [study](#) by Garrett & Crozier (2019) estimated the average length of suspension for failure to pay (or comply) at 5.8 years. To generate their estimate, the authors use data provided by the North Carolina Administrative Office of the Courts on driver's license suspensions from 2010-2017. Although this comes for data in a single state, we choose to use 5.8 as a proxy for the length of suspensions across the country for several reasons. First, the average estimated suspension length in the study was 5.8 years for failure to pay, but more than 11 years for failure to appear. To maintain consistency and to ensure that our findings represent the lower-bounds estimate of financial impact, we apply 5.8 years to both failure to pay and failure to appear reform formulas. Secondly, debt-based driver's license suspensions in most states are imposed indefinitely, meaning they remain in effect unless and until the

debt is paid off. For some people this will mean they would never regain their license. None of the states we reviewed in this analysis had a cap on the length of time a suspension could last. Lastly, the sheer lack of data in most states makes developing a more precise proxy impossible. Nonetheless, we believe 5.8 years remains a conservative estimate for the length of suspensions nationally.

55.3% reform uptake gap

- **What it represents:** the percent of people estimated to have actually been impacted by a DLS reform, rather than assuming every person with a suspended license saw a benefit.
- **Where it came from:** We had data from six states that provided us with clear figures on who had suspensions impacted by reform and who actually had their licenses restored. In each of those states, we calculated the percentage of suspended drivers who saw relief and then calculated the average across these states to estimate a more universal expectation to use as a national constant.

Table 7: Calculating the Reform Uptake Gap			
State	# of Suspended Drivers	# of restored drivers	Percentage of Drivers impacted by reform
CA ²⁶	500,000	426,000	77.5%
DC	68,204	65,922	96.7%
MI	348,893	154,326	44.2%
NY ²⁷	257,186	126,487	49.2%
OH	170,510	31,432	18.4%
TX	1,383,123	634,933	45.9%
		Average	55.3%

- **When we use it:** whenever the reform is not automatic or when a driver’s license suspension could still be in place due to other suspensions. The DLS reform uptake gap is only applied to data points that represent individuals (not suspensions) because we calculate it by using the number of licenses (people) restored over the number of licenses (people) eligible for restoration under the reform.

63.3% regained earnings uptake gap

- **What it represents:** based on extant literature, we estimate that people will regain up to 63.3% of their lost earnings due to a driver’s license suspension in the first year following reinstatement. This recognizes that simply regaining the ability to drive will not automatically restore people to their pre-suspension earnings.
- **Where it came from:** To arrive at this number, we calculated an average percent of regained earnings using figures from a study on [prison reentry](#) (Western & Sirios, 2019). The study estimates that formerly incarcerated white workers earn up to 80% of what the total white working population earned in the first year after reentering society from prison. For formerly incarcerated Black and Hispanic workers, those numbers are 50% and 60%, respectively, when compared to the total working population of their same race. We use the average of these three estimates, 63.3%, as our uptake gap. Although license suspension and incarceration are not equal punishments, there are similarities in racial disparities and loss of employment access. There is also some overlap in suspension and incarcerations populations, as courts sometimes use incarceration to enforce court debt – either as a punishment or through warrant enforcement – and because driving without a valid license is a criminal offense in every jurisdiction.

Moreover, the average length of a license suspension exceeds the average period of incarceration in a state prison by more than three years.²⁸ Although it is not a perfect match, using this average to create a regained earnings uptake gap guards against overstating the regained earnings impact.

- **When we use it:** when the number of people who regained their licenses due to reform was available to us, and when we calculated the estimated regained earnings for people with impacted suspensions at the time of reform. For example, when Arizona stopped suspending licenses for failure to pay, we know that 31,000 people in Arizona had their licenses restored.²⁹ The formula we used to calculate the regained earnings resulting from this is: [31,000 people with restored licenses] x [\$12,700 earnings loss per year] x [63.3% to translate *lost* earnings to *regained* earnings] = estimated earnings regained in first year.

2.9 suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap

- **What it represents:** the average number of suspensions per individual license.
- **Where it came from:** We obtained data from Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia that showed both the number of total suspensions and the number of suspended licenses (*i.e.*, individual drivers), which allowed us to calculate a state-by-state ratio of suspensions per license. We then took the average across these states to come up with a national constant.³⁰
- **When we use it:** When the data we have in a particular state represent suspensions without corresponding data for licenses or individual drivers impacted. For example, in Colorado, we only had data showing, on average, 100,000 suspensions annually. To calculate the prospective savings in terms of income kept, we need to convert that number of total suspensions to unique licenses (people). Using our national average estimate of 2.9 suspensions per person, that translates to 34,483 individual people who are likely affected.

Table 8: Calculating a Suspensions-to-License Uptake Gap			
State	Total Number of Suspensions	Total Number of Suspended Licenses	Suspensions per License
Delaware (2022)	12,861	4,435	2.9
Illinois (2020)	92,589	41,475	1.2
Maine (2018) ³¹	7,500	1,831	4.1
New York (2020)	3,100,000	1,400,000	2.2
Ohio (2024)	429,501	170,510	2.5
West Virginia (2022)	365,107	80,161	4.5
		Average	2.9

Process of Refining and Analyzing the Data

The collection of data for this report involved months of engagement with local data keepers and the scraping of data from publicly available sources. The research team met regularly to review the origin of each data point (government source, news article, etc.), the use of uptake gaps (or not) within the formulas, and the reasonableness of the assumptions made in our calculations as the team worked through analyses state by state. If the data points or formulas were determined to be too unreliable, either because too many assumptions were required or the data point lacked a credible or citable source, we decided not to calculate impact estimates for that particular reform in this report. In those cases, however, we still described the reform, since each reform inevitably has an impact on affected people, even if it cannot be quantified. We also reexamined the specifics of each statutory or policy reform to understand what was eliminated or changed and to ensure that the data analysis spoke to the results of those reforms. We reread every enactment document and, when further clarity was necessary, we spoke with local practitioners, advocates, and policymakers in the relevant state who were familiar with the particular reforms.

- After coming to a final agreement on all data points, formulas, and assumptions, the team used the data to run the following types of calculations:
- Fine or fee costs prevented (annual impact);
- Earnings regained due to driver's license reinstatements after driver's license suspension (DLS) reform (one-time impact);
- Reinstatement fee costs eliminated for people getting their licenses restored after DLS reform (one-time impact);
- Earnings kept in future years after DLS reform, over the lifetime of reform (5.8 years impact);
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented in future years after DLS reform (annual impact); and,
- Amount of outstanding debt waived in a reform (one-time impact).

Specifics on each reform calculation can be found in Appendix B.

Limitations

As with any research report, there are certain limitations to the methods we use. Understanding these constraints is essential for interpreting our findings appropriately. First, we were limited by the lack of precise, available data points on key metrics. In the fee elimination context, we often lacked the number of people upon whom a fee had been imposed in a given year, collections figures, or fee imposition totals. In the driver's license suspension context, it was sometimes impossible to ascertain the average annual number of suspensions for failure to appear in court, average annual number of suspensions for failure to pay, or the total number of suspensions in a particular jurisdiction. Sometimes, these numbers were available in the aggregate form, which created an impasse because we could not reliably estimate the proportion of failure to pay versus failure to appear. Other times, we had to calculate them ourselves using uptake gaps, where possible. **Table 9** depicts a list of reforms where we did not have data sufficient to quantify an impact, but which were considered in the report narratively, due to their qualitative importance.

This data gap is not inconsequential. It represents a significant barrier not only to conducting precise impact evaluations, but to evidence-based policymaking more broadly. For example, if agencies cannot quickly assess the magnitude of license suspensions, policymakers cannot assess whether reforms are having their intended effect or what reforms might be necessary to provide relief to the most people. The lack of data transparency also creates barriers for advocates to hold systems accountable. Notably, we were often unsuccessful in our attempts to locate missing data points through open records requests, either because the agency itself did not have easy access to the numbers we requested, or because the agencies were nonresponsive or declined to provide the information.

The lack of publicly available data on debt-based license suspensions, in particular, required us to use uptake gaps to account for the variation in reform comprehensiveness. These uptake gaps serve as estimators of several related phenomena that our data could not directly account for, including circumstances where people are partially eligible for relief, administrative barriers, and time lags. In some instances, the only data point available to us was a snapshot of people who had already achieved some relief through the reform, rather than an up-to-date figure. As formulaic estimators, these uptake gaps can never be as precise as concrete data from every state. Until these data challenges are resolved, we have to resort to certain assumptions or predictive constants to fill in the holes, where it is reasonable to do so.

Table 9: Reforms Reviewed in this Report Where We Could Not Find Financial Relief Impact Data

Campaign	State	Year	Reform Description
End Justice Fees	AL	2023	Jefferson County, AL - ticket expungement
End Justice Fees	IL	2025	Expansion of Cook County fee waiver program
End Justice Fees	LA	2022	Louisiana - Expungement processing fee elimination
End Justice Fees	NY	2020	Buffalo - Elimination of 15 local fees on traffic tickets
Free to Drive	AR	2021	Ending DLS for FTP related to noncriminal traffic infractions
Free to Drive	CA	2022	DLS FTA reform (takes effect in 2027)
Free to Drive	DC	2022	Repeal of Clean Hands Law (which had prevented drivers with over \$100 in outstanding fines and fees from obtaining or renewing their Driver's License)
Free to Drive	HI	2020	Ending DLS for FTP
Free to Drive	IL	2024	Ending DLS for FTA related to minor traffic infractions
Free to Drive	IN	2021	Ending DLS for FTP related to non-moving violations, and procedural reform to DLS for FTP
Free to Drive	MN	2021	Ending DLS for FTP related to petty misdemeanors and FTA related to driving after a suspension violation
Free to Drive	MT	2019	Partial ending of DLS for FTP
Free to Drive	NM	2022	Santa Fe - driver's license suspension reform
Free to Drive	WA	2021	Ending DLS for FTP related to non-criminal traffic infractions
Miscellaneous	FL	2021	Standardizing county payment plan policies
Miscellaneous	FL	2022	Capping payment plans at 2% of annual net income divided by 12 or \$25, whichever is greater
Miscellaneous	NM	2023	Expanding access to alternative ways to address fines and fees through expanding definitions of community service and reducing costly jail stays related to debt
Miscellaneous	NY	2020	Requiring options for payment plans, and capping payment plans at 2% of monthly income or \$25, whichever is greater
Miscellaneous	WA	2021	King County-establishing a restitution fund to provide restitution payments on behalf of youth who cannot afford to pay their financial obligations
Miscellaneous	VA	2025	Establishing standardized installment plans for fines and fees

Appendix B: Reform Formulas/Narratives By State

For each reform considered for this report, we lay out the specific assumptions and formulas used to calculate the total estimated impact for that reform. For driver's license suspension reforms, we often apply our national uptake gap as part of the calculation. Note that in the formulas throughout this appendix, our reform uptake gap percentage is written rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent (55.3%.) However, we calculated this uptake gap as an average of six data points, and in our raw calculations did not round that average, so the total impact estimates for each reform also use the full number (instead of rounding to a tenth of a percent.) Because of the magnitude of relief that we are calculating in these reforms, you may find that multiplying out the formulas as written below (where the uptake gap is rounded) may lead to a slightly different total than our raw calculations totals because of the rounding difference.

ALABAMA

Jefferson County Local Case Expungement Pilot: Jefferson County participated in the 2022-23 [Cities and Counties for Fines and Fees Justice \(CCFFJ\) cohort](#) run by FFJC, the San Francisco Financial Justice Project, and Results for America to enact local fine and fee reform. The county dismissed stale cases and recalled thousands of outstanding non-conviction warrants going as far back as the 1980s, immediately ensuring these individuals will no longer risk arrest or have to pay fines or fees. Additionally, in order to right-size financial assessments, a local court initiated a pilot project to reduce fine and fee assessments to \$100, from a previously typical assessment range of between \$489 and \$1,132.

Our calculations:

The direct financial relief to individuals is not yet possible to determine, given various data limitations about the cases and the associated fines and fees that would have been assessed if the cases were not expunged. Nonetheless, each dismissed warrant and expunged case eliminated any possibility of fines and fees being imposed in the first place, bringing significant financial relief to those involved. Additionally, by right-sizing assessments through the pilot program, a significant (though unspecified) number of people were able to avoid higher amounts of debt hanging over their heads, which for many would have been difficult, if not impossible, to pay.

ARKANSAS

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2021, Arkansas passed [SB 513](#), a partial failure to pay reform which repealed driver's license suspensions related to noncriminal traffic infractions. The reform was retroactive and automatic, resulting in the immediate reinstatement of driver's license suspensions for those determined to be eligible. However, the mechanics of reform still leave substantial room for people to get licenses suspended. For instance, the bill requires a hearing for failure to pay instead of automatic suspension, but if the person doesn't appear at the hearing, their license can still be suspended. The legislation also provides a 30-day grace period for failure to appear in district court before a license is suspended.

Our calculations:

We could not obtain data on the total number of suspensions in place at the time of reform and we were, thus, unable to calculate an impact estimate for this reform.

ARIZONA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2021, Arizona passed [SB 1551](#), which partially repealed FTP suspensions for civil traffic violations, such as parking tickets. The reform was retroactive, automatically lifting impacted suspensions and waived reinstatement fees, which ranged from [\\$10-\\$25](#). Consistent with

our policy to be conservative in our calculations, we used the low end of this reinstatement fee range for the impact formulas below.

The Arizona Department of Transportation reported that approximately [31,000 driver's licenses](#) were restored upon implementation. Because these licenses were specifically cited as *restored* (not just suspensions lifted), we do not need to apply our reform uptake gap to account for how many of these people may have had other reasons for their license remaining suspended.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$249,522,100 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: [31,000 licenses restored] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings into *regained* earnings] = at least **\$249,212,100 in estimated regained earnings** due to reform implementation
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [31,000 licenses X \$10 fee] = **\$310,000 in fees prevented** for people regaining licenses
- Future earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): *insufficient data available to calculate*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate*

CALIFORNIA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTA): In 2022, California passed [AB 2746](#), which barred courts from suspending driver's licenses for failure to appear in court beginning on January 1, 2023. However, the bill does not go into effect retroactively until 2027 to allow the Department of Motor Vehicles time to make needed information technology (IT) adjustments. An [assembly floor analysis](#) of the bill cites a government-issued report stating there were 600,000 licenses in California with FTA driver's license suspensions, though the number cited did not provide any information regarding when that snapshot was generated or the source from which it came.

Our calculations:

Without data on the number of people impacted by the reform, we were unable to calculate an impact estimate for this reform. Additionally, the bill does not go into full effect until 2027, so the full scope of the impact cannot yet be measured.

COLORADO

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): In 2021, Colorado passed a full repeal of FTP and FTA suspensions. The legislation, [HB 21-1314](#), forbids the state from revoking or denying licenses in a multitude of situations including: FTP or FTA related to outstanding fines and fees; misusing a license, titles, permits, or license plates; failure to register a car in Colorado; or offenses such as underage possession of alcohol, criminal mischief theft, or providing alcohol to a minor. The reform was retroactive, but did not automatically reinstate impacted licenses or waive the corresponding \$95 reinstatement fee. We were unable to obtain data on how many suspensions were listed or licenses restored upon implementation of the reform, making our total impact estimate for this reform conservative.

According to data reported by [Colorado Public Radio](#), the reform may impact up to 100,000 cases annually. We conservatively assume that "100,000 cases" refers to the number of suspensions impacted, not the number of licenses impacted (since a driver could have more than one suspension on their license.) Therefore,

we apply our average suspension-to-licenses uptake gap of 2.9 in our earnings kept formula to convert the reported number of cases to the number of unique licenses (individuals) experiencing relief annually.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$2,549,500,000 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: *insufficient data available to calculate*
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: *not applicable, as reinstatement fee was not waived for impacted licenses.*
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): [nearly 100,000 suspensions / suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap of 2.9] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year] X [5.8 years] = approximately **\$2,540,000,000 in estimated earnings kept** over the lifetime of reform.
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: [100,000 cases X \$27 fee] = **\$9,500,000 in costs prevented annually.** We acknowledge that the legislation's [fiscal note](#) estimated a different reinstatement fee waiver impact for the smaller population of all drivers who had their license revoked for reasons repealed under the bill *and which were reinstated* annually (18,619.) This impact, while valuable data, undercounts the magnitude of the reform's financial relief by excluding the debt relief impact for people who had licenses suspended but could not previously pay the reinstatement fee necessary to get their license reinstated. This group of people is also impacted by the waiver of the reinstatement fee, and may now even be able to get their licenses restored. Therefore, our formula and impact estimate is different from what is cited in the fiscal note.

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): In 2018, the District of Columbia passed [DC Law 22-175](#), a comprehensive FTP and FTA reform. The reform targeted people whose licenses had been suspended for FTP or FTA stemming from a moving violation. It was automatic and retroactive, unless the license had been suspended for over 365 days, in which case the person had to retake the driver's license test. At the time of the reform's implementation, [65,922 unique individuals](#) likely qualified for reinstatement.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$536,413,906 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: [65,922 licenses restored] x [\$12,700 earnings loss per year] x [63.3% to translate *lost* earnings into *regained* earnings] = **\$529,953,550 in estimated regained earnings** upon implementation
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [65,922 licenses restored] x [\$98 reinstatement fee] = **\$6,460,356 in fees prevented** for people regaining licenses
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*

Repeal of Clean Hands Law: In 2022, DC took further action to combat debt-based driver's license reform by [repealing its "Clean Hands" Law](#). The repeal of this legislation means drivers with more than \$100 in unpaid vehicle-related fines and fees are no longer barred from obtaining or renewing their driver's license.

Our calculations:

We do not have available data on the number of drivers who are eligible to regain their license under the repeal of this law, and so we are unable to calculate an impact estimate for this reform.

DELAWARE

Wilmington City Parking Ticket Reform: Wilmington, Delaware participated in the 2022-23 [Cities and Counties for Fines and Fees Justice \(CCFFJ\) cohort](#) run by FFJC, the San Francisco Financial Justice Project, and Results for America to enact local fine and fee reform. Through these efforts, in its FY2024 budget, the City of Wilmington reduced parking tickets from \$40 to \$25 if paid within 14 days. Local advocates argued that the \$40 ticket was too steep for most residents, and even worse, it escalated quickly if unpaid—rising to \$100 after just 90 days.

Our calculations:

Wilmington's [FY2024 Budget](#) revenue documents projected that this change would **prevent the extraction of \$535,000 from households annually**. Without more detailed parking ticket assessment data, we rely on this government projection as the estimate for the relief people in Wilmington will see annually from lower parking ticket amounts.

Statewide Fines and Fees Elimination (2022): Delaware passed [HB 244](#) in 2022, the first of two statewide fine and fee reforms. The passage of this bill eliminated a number of different fees that were being imposed on people who interact with the criminal legal system. This reform **ended the government's extraction of at least \$1,462,800 per year** from justice-involved people and their families, based on the estimates reported in the bill's fiscal note.

Our calculations:

Because we could not find data on how much was assessed annually for these fees, we relied on the fiscal note's estimate of how much was *collected* on average each year, as a conservative estimate of annual financial relief for justice-involved people not having to pay or owe these fees in the future. Specifically, the fees that were eliminated and their corresponding annualized amounts were:

- Probation fees (about \$792,700 extracted annually);
- Fees for public counsel services (about \$320,000 extracted annually);
- Juvenile fines and fees, (about \$7,500 extracted annually);
- Fees for canceling a warrant issued due to nonpayment (about \$75,600 extracted annually);
- Fees for late payments made to the courts (about \$220,000 extracted annually); and
- Fees for making an e-payment online (about \$47,000 extracted annually).

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In the same [2022 legislation](#) that eliminated many justice system fees, Delaware also passed a full repeal of FTP suspensions. The reform was retroactive and the \$50 reinstatement fee was waived for those regaining their licenses, but the process to reinstate was not automatic. We do not have available data on how many licenses were restored upon implementation of the reform. The bill's [fiscal note](#), however, reports that in 2018, there were 12,861 suspensions for nonpayment. We use our suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap of 2.9 to translate that number from 12,861 unique suspensions to 4,435 unique licenses, and assume this is a reasonable estimate of how many licenses would be suspended for FTP annually if not for this reform.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$327,312,450 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): [12,861 suspensions per year / suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap of 2.9] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year] X [5.8 years] = **\$326,669,400 in estimated earnings kept over the lifetime of reform**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: [12,861 suspensions X \$50 fee] = **\$643,050 in costs prevented annually.**

Statewide Fines and Fees Elimination (2024): Delaware expanded on their momentum from 2022 fines and fees reform by passing [SB 282](#), [SB 283](#), and [SB 284](#) in 2024. Together, these bills eliminated several additional types of court-imposed fees that **were extracting approximately \$171,744 from justice-involved people annually** (based on multi-year averages) and discharged **\$14,438,900** in outstanding debt related to now-eliminated fees.

Our calculations:

Because we could not find data on how much was *assessed* annually for these fees, we relied on the [fiscal note's](#) estimate of how much was *collected* each year as a conservative estimate of annual financial relief for justice-involved people not having to pay or owe these fees in the future. Specifically, the eliminated fees include:

- A \$100 Senior Trust Fund Fee (average of \$8,929 extracted annually between FY2022 and FY2023);
- A \$50 Interstate Compact Fee, paid by people on probation to request that their probation's direct reporting be transferred to another state (average of \$17,907 extracted annually over a recent 5-year period.) The bill also forgave any outstanding debt associated with this fee, which brought at least \$38,900 in debt relief for people with outstanding payments, though the full extent of debt relief is unknown due to government data tracking limitations;
- A Substance Abuse Rehabilitation, Treatment, Education and Prevention Fund Fee (average of \$25,621 extracted annually between FY2022 and FY2023); and
- A \$1 DELJIS Fund fee imposed on every criminal or traffic defendant in Delaware (average of \$119,287 extracted annually between FY2022 and FY2023.)

Furthermore, [SB 284](#) discharged all outstanding supervision fee balances from before the supervision fee was [repealed in 2021](#). This brought approximately [\\$14.4 million in relief](#) to people with outstanding supervision fee debt.

FLORIDA

Alachua County Jail Fees Elimination: In 2023, Alachua County, Florida, [eliminated various fees](#) charged to people while incarcerated, which we estimate **previously extracted at least \$1.2 million per year** from incarcerated people and their families. These fees include:

- A \$4/day room & board fee;

- A \$5 medical copay fee;
- A \$20 inmate uniform fee; and
- An \$80 transportation fee for elective medical treatment.

Our calculations:

Ideally, for each fee eliminated, we would calculate the total relief impact for people by multiplying the number of people charged the fee each year by the fee amount.

For the room and board fee, we do not have a precise accounting of how many people were charged this fee, so we instead used the May 2023 average daily population (856 people) from the [Jail Data Initiative](#) as a proxy for how many people were charged this fee per year. Therefore, our estimate of the annual cost prevented for this fee after reform is: [856 people per day] X [\$4/day fee] X [365 days in a year] = **\$1,249,760 in estimated room and board fees prevented annually.**

For all other fees, we do not have data on how often people have needed to access the corresponding services and therefore cannot estimate how many people were charged the fees. Given the lack of county data, the full extent of relief from the total amount of fees imposed could be much greater than the \$1.2 million we know of. Additionally, the County reported only collecting \$73,062 for the medical copay and inmate uniform fees combined in FY21.³² This suggests that even if the fees were regularly imposed, they were rarely collected, meaning the alleviation of the fee burden for people in jails and their families far outweighs any cost to the government from no longer collecting revenue from these fees.

Alachua Free Jail Phone Calls: In April 2023, the Alachua County Commission voted to provide free phone calls for people incarcerated in the Alachua County Jail. Prior to the local legislation, if families wanted to speak with their loved ones, it would have meant **an estimated \$2.5 million charged annually**, based on county government call volume estimates. Now, that money stays with the families instead of with the government and its vendor, Securus.

Our calculations:

Prior to reform, the County charged families 21 cents per minute to connect with their loved ones on phone calls. At the April 2023 [County Commission meeting](#) during which the reform was passed, jail staff estimated an average per-person phone time of 37 minutes per day. We used these data points, as well as the Jail Data Initiative's [average daily jail population](#) for Alachua in October 2023 (the time of reform implementation), to create the following impact formula: [Oct 2023 avg daily jail population of 871] X [\$.21 per minute call cost] X [average call time of 37 minutes/day/person] X [365 days] = **\$2,470,200 phone call costs prevented annually for families** now that phone calls to Alachua County Jail are free.

Miami-Dade Free Jail Phone Calls: In 2022, Miami-Dade County voted to make phone calls free for people incarcerated in Miami-Dade County jails. Prior to this, we estimate that families would have been charged **at least \$4.2 million annually** to stay in touch with their loved ones. Now, that money stays with the families instead of going to the government and its vendor, Global Tel Link (GTL). Implementation of this policy change was incremental due to changing jail structural and policy processes: immediately upon reform, the cost of phone calls lowered from 14 cents/minute to 4.5 cents/minute (a decrease of 9.5 cents/minute), but calls did not become fully free until January 1, 2026,³³ after data collection for this report had ended. As such, for the purposes of this report we calculate the financial impact for families of the interim reduced price of phone calls, but not of a full cost elimination.

Our calculations:

Upon reform, the Miami-Dade County Commission voted to put out a new jail communications [vendor RFP](#).

This document cites an average daily population of 4,400 in the county jail³⁴ and an average of 27.5 minutes/day of call time per person. Using that data, our impact estimate is: [avg daily jail population of 4,400] X [9.5 cents/minute cost reduction] X [average call time of 27.5 minutes/day/person] X [365 days] = **\$4,195,675/year in estimated costs prevented annually** for families talking to their loved ones, even before full fee elimination kicked in.

We will expect to see an even larger annual financial relief impact for incarcerated people and their families as a result of full implementation. From January 2026, the impact formula will become: [avg daily jail population of 4,400] X [14 cents/minute cost reduction] X [average call time of 27.5 minutes/day/person] X [365 days]= \$6,183,100/year in estimated costs prevented annually. However, because the date of full implementation is so recent, we do not include this higher estimate in our overall impact calculations; we provide it here solely as an example of what is expected.

Miami-Dade Jail Subsistence Fee Elimination: In May 2022, [Miami-Dade County](#) ended a \$2 per day room and board fee imposed on everyone incarcerated in county jails. These fees were holding formerly incarcerated people and their families hostage for years after they had served their time. Beyond the Bars, a local nonprofit that worked with policymakers to pass this reform, testified to families being held back for years because of this debt. In addition to eliminating the daily fee, the County Commission expunged all debt associated with the room and board fee. In 2024, the County Commission passed another [resolution](#) eliminating several other jail-related fees, including fees for processing, routine medical services fees, and fees related to the Boot Camp Program, Work Release Program, and Monitored Release Program. That 2024 resolution also waived any other outstanding debt associated with these fees. In total, these legislative actions **discharged \$96 million of outstanding debt, and prevented at least \$3.2 million annually from being imposed** on incarcerated people and their loved ones.

Our calculations:

We were not able to find the average daily jail population at the precise time of reform. However, because this reform occurred in the same year as the phone call free elimination, we used the same 4,400 average daily jail population listed in the county's phone vendor Request for Proposal (RFP).³⁵ Our resulting impact formula is: [4,400 people charged fee/day] X [\$2/day fee] X [365 days] = **\$3,212,000 in costs prevented annually** for incarcerated people.

We do not have sufficient data to calculate an estimate of how much in costs are prevented annually as a result of the other fees eliminated in the 2024 resolution, but nonetheless these fee eliminations undoubtedly brought important financial relief to those being charged the fees.

Court Payment Plan Cap: In 2021, Florida passed [SB 838](#), which among other things, standardized the payment plan forms used by clerks of court across the state. Prior to this legislation, the forms varied widely from clerk's office to clerk's office, making it more difficult for people who could not afford to pay their fines and fees to access a payment plan.

Our calculations:

Though there is no direct financial impact that we could calculate for this reform, it is an important procedural reform that helps address the harms fine and fee debt cause to the people who owe them.

Uniform County Payment Plan Policies: In 2022, Florida passed [HB 397](#), which created more affordable payment plans for the millions of people who cannot immediately pay court-ordered fines and fees in Florida. The law sets minimum payment plan amounts at \$25 per month or 2% of a person's annual net income divided by 12 (whichever amount is greater.) Prior to this legislation there was no standardized way that monthly payments were calculated across the state, and a person's financial position was not often taken into account.

Our calculations:

Again, though there is no direct financial impact that we could calculate for this reform, it is an important step that Florida took to address barriers people face to accessing payment plans and resolving their fine and fee debt.

HAWAII

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2020, Hawaii passed [HB 2750](#), a repeal of failure to pay (FTP) suspensions for traffic fines and fees, prohibiting the state from blocking the renewal or issuance of a license associated with outstanding court debt. The reform was not retroactive, so drivers with suspended license at the time of reform were not impacted.

Our calculations:

We were unable to obtain data on how many FTP suspensions were issued each year pre-reform, making it difficult to calculate an impact estimate for this reform.

ILLINOIS

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): Illinois passed a series of bills over three years that together repealed all FTP suspensions, as well as FTA suspensions related to minor traffic offenses. We estimate that drivers who had licenses restored due to these reforms **have seen more than \$1.9 billion in regained earnings** – a magnitude of relief that speaks to the power of comprehensive reform. Unfortunately, due to data limitations, we were not able to estimate the annual earnings drivers who no longer face suspension would keep in their pockets post-reform, making our statewide impact estimate for these reforms significantly more conservative. The individual reform impacts we were able to calculate are as follows:

In 2020, Illinois passed the [License to Work Act](#), ending FTP suspensions related to non-moving violations (like parking tickets.) The reform was retroactive, including automatically clearing impacted suspensions and waiving the \$70 reinstatement fee. As a result of this reform, 92,589 suspensions were cleared on [74,999 drivers' licenses](#). However, it is unclear how many of those licenses were fully reinstated and how many may still have had other barriers to reinstatement, such as suspensions for non-debt reasons on the license. Therefore, we apply our national uptake gap to our earnings-regained formula to account for this uncertainty and guard against overestimating. We also assume that each driver, if not for this reform, would have had to pay a \$70 reinstatement fee per *suspension*, even if they had multiple suspensions on one license (see the formula and estimate following these bullets). We do not have data on how many suspensions were issued annually, making it infeasible to calculate an estimated annual impact of kept earnings for drivers each year after reform.

In 2021, Illinois passed [HB 3653](#), a new law expanding the reform by ending FTP suspensions for traffic violations and automated camera tickets. This resulted in removing suspensions and holds from an estimated 350,000 people's driving records,³⁶ allowing more drivers to return to work, regain more than a billion dollars in estimated earnings in the first year after reform, and avoid millions in reinstatement fee costs (see the formula and estimate following these bullets). Again, it is unclear how many of those licenses were fully reinstated or how many may have had remaining barriers, such as other suspensions on the license. Therefore, we apply our national uptake gap to our earnings regained formula to account for this uncertainty and ensure a conservative estimate. We do not have data on how many suspensions were issued annually, so again cannot calculate an annual impact of kept earnings for drivers each year after reform.

In 2024, Illinois passed [HB 277](#), which repealed FTA suspensions for minor traffic tickets. This reform was retroactive and automatically lifted suspensions for drivers with FTA suspensions since January 1, 2020. According to a public records request obtained by our partner advocates, 34,841 driver's licenses were slated

to be fully reinstated automatically at the time of reform. However, in November 2025, local advocates shared with FFJC that [SB 852](#), passed in 2025, includes language that delayed the date by which the government must implement license reinstatements until Jan 1, 2026. According to advocates, this legislation may also reduce the number of licenses ultimately reinstated. If all initially reported 34,841 licenses were to be reinstated, we estimate that drivers would regain about \$280 million in earnings upon implementation, and one-time reinstatement costs prevented would be about \$2.4 million (see the calculations that follow). However, given the delayed implementation date and new questions around how many of these licenses will actually be reinstated, we do not include this impact in our report totals.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$1,920,723,549 in financial relief just in the first year of implementation, with significantly more relief expected over the lifetime of reform.

Regained earnings: in total, we estimate at least **\$1,889,742,319 in regained earnings due to reform implementation**.

- 2020 Reform: [74,999 licenses X reform uptake gap of 55.3%] X [\$12,700 X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* into *regained earnings*] = **\$333,480,277 in estimated regained earnings** resulting from this reform
- 2021 Reform: [350,000 licenses X reform uptake gap of 55.3%] X [\$12,700 X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* into *regained earnings*] = **\$1,556,262,042 in estimated regained earnings** resulting from this reform
- 2024 reform potential impact: *not included in report totals, due to uncertainty around final implementation*

Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: in total, we estimate **at least \$30,981,230 in one-time costs prevented at the upon implementation of reform**

- 2020 reform: [92,589 suspensions] X [\$70 reinstatement fee] = **\$6,481,230 in one-time costs prevented**
- 2021 reform: [350,000 licenses] X [\$70 reinstatement fee] = **\$24,500,000 in one-time costs prevented**
- 2024 reform potential impact, not included in report totals: *not included in report totals due to uncertainty around final implementation*

Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): *insufficient data available to calculate an impact for any reforms*

Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact for any reforms*

Cook County Vehicle Registration Fee Elimination: In 2022, Cook County passed the [Wheel Tax Elimination Ordinance](#), which eliminated the county's vehicle registration fines and fees.

Our calculations:

It is estimated that this law now prevents approximately 50,000 people from being charged \$80-\$100 in vehicle registration fees per year. In our impact calculations, we use the lower bounds of this fee range to be conservative. Therefore, our estimate of the annual cost prevented for this fee after reform is: [50,000 people who no longer have to pay the fee annually] X [\$80 per year in fees] = **\$4,000,000 in costs to individuals prevented annually**.

Expansion of Cook County Traffic Fee Waiver Program: In 2021, [SB 626](#) created a traffic fee waiver

program in Cook County, which allowed Cook County residents who got a speeding ticket or other traffic violation to apply for a partial (25% to 50%) waiver of those assessments, if their financial circumstances were considered to be indigent. In 2025, Illinois passed [SB0108](#) to extend the pilot program in Cook County beyond its pilot timeline, helping ensure that the burden of traffic fees continued to be prevented for those least able to afford it.

Our calculations:

We were unable to find any information on the amount of traffic fees that were prevented through the pilot program (or that were assessed prior to the program's start), so we were not able to calculate an impact estimate for this reform. Nonetheless, it remains an important reform to highlight.

INDIANA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTA): In 2021, Indiana passed [HB 1199](#), which banned future suspensions for failure to appear in court (FTA) on non-moving violations (except for some juvenile drivers.) Additionally, pre-existing failure to pay (FTP) suspensions for non-moving violations can now be paused upon drivers getting SR22 insurance. The reform is not retroactive, but as part of the reform to FTP suspensions, all indefinite FTP suspensions were changed to 3-year suspensions, and will be automatically lifted after that time has passed. On December 31, 2024 (3 years after passage) all FTP suspensions from before passage (before 2021) were therefore lifted, bringing financial relief to people after three years of having a driver's license suspension for FTP.

Our calculations:

We did not calculate the financial impact estimate of this reform because we could not identify data on the number of drivers impacted by the legislation and because we are unable to measure some of the complicated procedural guidelines of the reform. Nonetheless, it remains an important reform to highlight.

KANSAS

Wyandotte County Justice Fees Elimination: Wyandotte County, Kansas participated in the 2022-23 [Cities and Counties for Fines and Fees Justice \(CCFFJ\) cohort](#) run by FFJC, the San Francisco Financial Justice Project, and Results for America to enact local fine and fee reform. Through these efforts, the county [eliminated several court costs and fees](#), including a \$30 municipal court fee, a public defender fee, a booking fee, and a trial docketing fee. It also codified an ability-to-pay docket.

Our calculations:

According to data that FFJC received from the Wyandotte court administrator, in 2021 and 2022, a total of \$225,750 in court costs was assessed for these fees. By taking the average of what was assessed in those passed years, and assuming that this average would have persisted had the reform not happened, we can **estimate \$112,875 in annual fees prevented as a result of the reform.**

The court administrator also noted that these numbers were likely a conservative estimate of how much in annual fees is prevented each year, since the 2022 assessment data was about 10-12% below what was expected, due to the post-Covid recovery.

LOUISIANA

Expungement Processing Fee Elimination: In 2022, Louisiana passed [HB 162](#), which eliminated a \$550 expungement fee for people wrongfully convicted of a crime. Though we are not able to provide an impact estimate for this reform, it will undoubtedly bring relief to people who have already suffered a miscarriage of justice.

Our calculations:

According to the [fiscal note](#), the reform is not anticipated to have a substantial financial impact due to the small number of people eligible for relief. Moreover, the fiscal note reports the number of people who qualify for the fee exemption as “indeterminable.” Therefore, we were not able to calculate an impact estimate for this reform. Nonetheless, it remains an important reform to highlight.

MAINE

Driver’s License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2018, Maine passed [LD 1190](#), a partial FTP reform that barred driver’s license suspensions for nonpayment of fines related to non-traffic criminal offenses. The reform was not retroactive or automatic, meaning that people with existing suspensions for FTP in this context did not receive immediate relief. In 2020, Maine passed [LD 1953](#), which prohibits driver’s license suspensions for failure to pay a civil traffic fine. However, the state continues to suspend drivers licenses for failure to appear in court.

FFJC’s Free to Drive campaign had not yet been created during the 2018 reform, and FFJC played no role in advancing this reform, so we do not include impact estimates for this reform in the totals for this report. However, we do include impact estimates for Maine’s 2020 reform, which leveraged FFJC’s guidance and expertise. We could not find any data on the number of people impacted by the 2020 traffic-related reform. Instead, our calculations below use information from the [2018 reform’s fiscal note](#) stating that 7,500 reinstatement fees are paid annually for suspensions related to non-traffic offenses. Because driver’s license suspensions for FTP/FTA stemming from traffic offenses are more common than non-traffic criminal offenses,³⁷ we believe this is a reasonable conservative proxy for the *minimum* number of people impacted by the 2020 reform targeting FTP for traffic violations. Additionally, we use our suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap to account for multiple possible suspensions per license.

Our calculations:

Assuming that the number of people impacted by the 2020 reform is equal to or greater than the number of people impacted by the 2018 reform, we estimate that **this reform created at least \$190,881,250 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.**

- Regained earnings: *not applicable, as the reform was not retroactive*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: *not applicable, as the reform was not retroactive*
- Earnings kept over lifetime of the 2020 reform, *based on the 2018 reform fiscal note*: [at least 7,500 suspensions annually / 2.9 suspensions-to-people uptake gap] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 5.8 years] = **\$190,500,000 in estimated kept earnings kept** over lifetime of reform.
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: According to the [fiscal note](#) for the 2018 reform, **\$381,250 in reinstatement fees are prevented per year** due to the repeal of FTP suspensions for non-traffic reasons. We assume this is a reasonable, yet conservative, proxy for the costs prevented due to the 2020 reform repealing FTP suspensions for traffic violations, which likely affected a greater number of people, though the data is incomplete.

MARYLAND

Driver’s License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2020, Maryland passed [SB 0234](#), enacting a partial repeal of failure to pay (FTP) suspensions for unpaid Motor Vehicle Administration (MVA) fines and fees. The reform was retroactive, and according to stakeholders who worked on the bill, it automatically lifted impacted suspensions and waived reinstatement fees. In the legislation’s [fiscal note](#), the MVA reports that “about 166,100 suspended licenses are affected by the bill.” However, the fiscal note did not specify if this meant

suspensions on 166,100 licenses were lifted, or 166,100 licenses were fully reinstated. We attempted to reach out to staff at the MVA to clarify this question, but did not receive a reply. To be conservative, we assume the data refers to the licenses with suspensions lifted, but that other barriers (such as a separate suspension unrelated to court debt) may still have kept some individual drivers from fully regaining their license. Thus, we apply our national uptake gap to our earnings regained formula to account for that possibility. A 2020 [press release](#) from the Maryland Attorney General also cited that there were more than 29,000 Maryland residents getting an FTP suspension between 2015 to 2019, which averages to 5,800 residents getting suspended for FTP annually. We use this five-year average number of suspended licenses per year as a proxy for how many people will now avoid getting FTP suspensions annually, thanks to the reform.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$1,181,256,500 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

Regained earnings: [166,100 licenses X reform uptake gap of 55.3%] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* into *regained earnings*] = at least **\$738,557,500 in estimated regained earnings due to reform implementation**

- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [166,100 licenses X [\\$90 reinstatement fee](#)] = **\$14,949,000 in costs prevented upon reform**
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): [5,800 licenses X \$12,700 earnings loss per year] X [5.8 years] = **\$427,228,000 in estimated future earnings kept over lifetime of reform**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: [5,800 licenses X \$90 fee] = **\$522,000 in costs prevented per year**

Parole Supervision Fee Elimination: In 2024, Maryland [passed legislation](#) eliminating its \$50/month parole and administrative supervision fee, as well as a \$100 fee that people on supervision had to pay for government-ordered drug and alcohol testing. In addition, the state forgave all outstanding debt for the fees eliminated in the reform. We estimate this reform ended the government's **extraction of about \$1.3 million per year from justice-involved people and their families, and lifted a huge burden of debt – \$13.4 million** – off of the shoulders of those who had outstanding fees at the time of reform.

Our calculations:

The legislation's [fiscal note](#) reported total assessments and collections from FY2021 to FY2023 for the fees eliminated in this reform. Over those three years, the state imposed \$3,761,247, or an average of **\$1,253,749 per year**. We use this average annual assessment as a proxy for the annual assessments people would be charged in fees each year in the future, if not for this reform.

The fiscal note also reported how much of each year's imposed fees were collected annually from FY2021 to FY2023. Over the three-year period, \$215,724 was collected, representing only a 5.7% collection rate for these fees. The remainder of assessed fees lingered as unpayable debt for people already struggling financially. [According to Maryland's governor](#), the **total debt canceled as part of this reform was \$13,360,088** coming from 6,715 supervision cases. This highlights the way that fine and fee reforms not only bring significant financial relief to those that were being charged, but also end public reliance on fees that were largely uncollectable, presumably due in large part to people's inability to pay. Waiving this debt significantly increased the financial impact of reform.

MICHIGAN

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): In 2021, Michigan passed [HB 5846](#), which partially

repealed failure to pay (FTP) and failure to appear (FTA) suspensions as part of a clean slate reform bill. The reform was retroactive, including automatically lifting impacted suspensions and waiving the [\\$125 reinstatement fee](#). According to details shared in a [study](#) on FTA and FTP suspension reform, this legislation impacted the driving records of 348,893 Michigan residents. Of that total, 154,326 drivers were eligible for full license reinstatement, while the other 194,567 drivers were ineligible for reinstatement due to “other infractions” (i.e., other suspensions remaining on their licenses.) Since we know how many licenses were fully eligible for reinstatement due to reform (not just how many licenses had suspensions lifted), we do not need to use our reform uptake gap in our earnings regained impact formula.

Of note, this clean slate reform legislation changed driving records for issues beyond just FTP or FTA, including parking holds, drug crime sanctions, and minor in possession sanctions. However, approximately 95% of the licensing actions caused by the reform were clearing FTA or FTP suspensions specifically. Therefore, we assume that the earnings impact for drivers with licenses eligible for reinstatement is primarily due to the repeal of FTP and FTA suspensions. We also assume that all 348,893 drivers with impacted licenses benefited from not having to pay a reinstatement fee for the particular suspension or hold that was cleared, even if their license did not become automatically eligible for reinstatement.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$1,284,253,772 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: [154,326 licenses eligible for reinstatement] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* into *regained earnings*] = at least **\$1,240,642,147 in estimated regained earnings due to reform implementation**
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [348,893 licenses impacted X \$125 reinstatement fee] = **\$43,611,625 in costs prevented.**³⁸
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*

Washtenaw County Court Fees Elimination: Washtenaw County, MI participated in the [2022-23 Cities and Counties for Fines and Fees Justice \(CCFFJ\)](#) cohort run by FFJC, the San Francisco Financial Justice Project, and Results for America to enact local fine and fee reform. Through these efforts, the County implemented a judicial administrative [policy to eliminate](#) a \$60 fingerprint fee, \$1,611 in court costs, and a \$650 attorney fee for individuals who qualify for assigned counsel - fees that amount to roughly 12% of the total annual income for the poorest resident in the county.

Our calculations:

One year into implementation, the judge implementing the reform [reported \\$924,749 in fees waived at sentencing](#), impacting 409 people. We use this amount in our impact totals without doing any further calculations.

MINNESOTA

Driver’s License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): In 2021, Minnesota passed [HF 336](#), ending failure to pay (FTP) drivers license suspensions for all petty misdemeanor traffic violations, including moving violations, equipment violations, and parking tickets. It also ended failure to appear (FTA) suspensions for driving-after-suspension violations, though not for other misdemeanor and felony traffic violations. In 2023, Minnesota passed a follow-up bill, [HF 490](#), making the reform retroactive but not automatic. People with driver’s license suspensions still have to navigate the reinstatement process and pay a \$20 reinstatement fee to have

their license restored. According to the [fiscal note](#) associated with HF490, 8,026 drivers were eligible for reinstatement under the new legislation. Below, we use our reform uptake gap to account for the reform not being automatic.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$35,687,312 in financial relief upon implementation.

- Regained earnings: [8,026 people eligible for reinstatement X 55.3% reform uptake gap] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* to *regained earnings*] = **an estimated \$35,687,312 earnings regained** in the year after reform.
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: *not applicable, as the reform did not waive reinstatement fees*
- Earnings kept over the lifetime of reform: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*

Phone Call Costs Elimination, Department of Human Services Correction Facilities: In 2023, Minnesota made phone calls free for people incarcerated in state Department of Corrections-run prisons, saving families at least [\\$3.1 million](#) per year. FFJC was not involved in this first bill and so we do not include the \$3.1 million impact in our report impact totals.

The following year, FFJC supported advocacy efforts to [expand the free phone calls policy](#) for people incarcerated in facilities run by the state Department of Human Services (DHS.) We were not able to identify sufficient data to calculate the financial relief impact of this expansion, and so do not include a total for this impact in our report either. However, the advocate group Worth Rises estimates that families had been paying about \$135,000 per year to stay in touch with their loved ones.³⁹ Together, these reforms have had an undeniably significant impact to ensure that all people have access to their loved ones and support networks during periods of incarceration.

MONTANA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2019, Montana passed [HB 217](#), which partially repealed failure to pay (FTP) suspensions for unpaid fines, fees, and restitution. The reform was retroactive but not automatic. Drivers with licenses impacted by the reform had to petition the court to have their suspensions lifted, and reinstatement fees were only sometimes waived, if all requirements were met. Procedural barriers also remained for people that owed fines and fees that, if not navigated correctly, could still ultimately result in a suspension.

Our calculations:

We were unable to find sufficient data on how many people's licenses were reinstated or on how many people were being suspended annually for reasons impacted under the reform, and so are unable to calculate an estimate of kept earnings post-reform.

The only related data point we found was from the ACLU Montana, one of the organizations that led the reform effort in Montana, which published [an article](#) highlighting that the licenses of more than 10,000 low-income people who cannot afford court debt are suspended per year. However, the article does not specify how many people's suspensions were due specifically to FTA, FTP, or another reason. Because this reform only impacts FTP suspensions, this data was not precise enough to use to produce a reliable estimate. In theory, if all 10,000 license suspensions were due to FTP suspensions, the impact of no longer suspending similar numbers of drivers in future years would be: [10,000 licenses] X [\$12,700] X [5.8 years]

= \$736,600,000 in estimated future earnings retained by those individuals over time. However, given the uncertainty around the data, this estimate might overstate the proportion of suspended licenses that were actually impacted by reform, and so we do not include it in our impact totals in this report.

NEVADA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2021, Nevada passed [SB 219](#), which included a full repeal of failure to pay (FTP) suspensions. The reform was retroactive, including automatically lifting impacted suspensions and waiving reinstatement fees. Because of that reform, news outlets reported that [33,000 people](#) were eligible to have their licenses reinstated, restoring an estimated \$265 million in annual earnings that directly support families.

Though this reform had a tremendous impact for people regaining their licenses and not having to worry about receiving a failure to pay suspension in the first two years after reform, a separate piece of [legislation](#) passed the same year had language that effectively allowed FTP suspension practices to resume in 2023. This has limited the annual impact that the original legislation has for Nevada drivers, and so we do not include impact estimates here for annual earnings kept in future years.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$267,765,300 in financial relief for people regaining their licenses upon reform.

- Regained earnings: [33,000 licenses reinstated] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* into *regained earnings*] = at least **\$265,290,300 in estimated regained earnings during the limited time that this reform lasted**
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [260,000 licenses X \$75 [reinstatement fee](#)] = **\$2,475,000 in costs prevented.**
- Earnings kept over the lifetime of reform (5.8 years): *not applicable, given the short-term nature of the reform*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *not applicable, given the short-term nature of the reform*

Warrant Fees Elimination: In 2021, Nevada passed [AB 116](#), which decriminalized minor traffic violations, making them civil infractions and ending the widespread practice of issuing warrants when an individual cannot afford to pay the fines and fees imposed. Prior to reform, each warrant carried a [\\$200 warrant fee](#), creating a significant debt burden for people on top of the other stark consequences of having a warrant issued. Upon implementation of the reform, the state of Nevada immediately voided all outstanding bench warrants for decriminalized offenses, meaning that the outstanding warrant fee debt associated with each warrant was cleared. [At least 52,792 warrants](#) were voided in this process from Las Vegas Municipal Court, North Las Vegas Municipal Court, and Reno Municipal Court, though the total number of warrants voided from other parts of the state is unknown. Relying on the limited data available, we know there were *at least* 52,792 cases where the \$200 warrant fee did not need to be paid, bringing significant debt relief to the people who had warrants quashed.

Since the reform passed, warrant fee costs have been prevented each year for people with now-decriminalized traffic infractions, because warrants are no longer issued in these cases. Data on the number of traffic warrants previously issued annually for these violations statewide is unavailable; however, we do have data on outstanding traffic warrants specifically from Las Vegas Municipal Court. According to a [2021 study](#), there were 83,943 outstanding traffic warrants in 2021 that were issued between 2012-2020 by the Las Vegas Municipal Court, or an average of 9,327 warrants per year. This information helps us estimate the

partial impact of reform for Las Vegas,⁴⁰ which of course represents only a piece of the financial relief felt by people throughout Nevada due to reform. Yet, even this partial picture of relief is significant and illustrative in and of itself.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$12,423,800 in financial relief for people.

- Debt discharged for people with outstanding warrants that were voided: [at least 52,792 voided warrants] X [\$200 warrant fee] = **at least \$10,558,400** in one-time canceled debt.
- Annual estimated amount in future warrant fees (Las Vegas only) that have been prevented for people with now-decriminalized traffic infractions: [9,327 Las Vegas traffic warrants issued per year] X [\$200 warrant fee] = **at least \$1,865,400 in warrant fee costs prevented in Las Vegas.** This calculation also uses only data for *open* traffic warrants in Las Vegas Municipal Court as of 2021, meaning this calculation is a conservative one as it does not count warrants issued where fees may have been paid and/or the warrant was closed, and it does not count any traffic warrants issued by the Las Vegas Justice Court. The true financial relief brought through preventing warrant fees in Las Vegas, and statewide, is undoubtedly much higher than we can calculate here.

Prison Pay-To-Stay Fees Elimination: In 2023, Nevada passed [SB 416](#), ending room and board fees and medical co-pays for incarcerated people. Prior to the passage of SB 416, the Nevada’s Department of Correction’s (NDOC) policy was to garnish 25% of all wages earned by incarcerated people for “room and board”, despite the fact that these wages could be as low as 60 cents an hour. Prior to reform, Nevada had also charged \$8 per medical visit– the [second-highest](#) medical copay in the country for incarcerated individuals – creating significant debt burdens and restricting critical health access for people in prisons.

Our calculations:

- In total, we estimate that these reforms created \$1,209,807 in financial relief for people.
- Annual room & board costs prevented: we use data shared with FFJC from NDOC on how many people were being charged room & board fees and how much was assessed as of 2023,⁴¹ to estimate the annual impact of eliminating this fee. Our formula is as follows: [approximately 2,922 people charged fee annually] X [\$350 charged per person] = approximately **\$1,022,700 in annual room & board costs that NDOC will no longer charge due to reform.**
- Annual medical copays: The legislation’s [fiscal note](#) includes data that show \$187,107 was being collected per year in copays prior to reform. We use this same figure as a reasonable proxy for the charges that will now be avoided for people who are incarcerated in future years, meaning **that \$187,107 will no longer be charged annually to incarcerated people who need medical care.**

Prison Commissary, Cost Markup Reform: Prior to reform, NDOC had been marking up Nevada prison commissary items [by more than 66%](#), resulting in extremely high costs for necessary items such as menstrual products, shampoo, and toothpaste. In 2023, after bringing this fact to the attention of legislators, NDOC removed all mark-ups on hygiene items. SB 416 then [codified this policy](#) into law, ensuring that any future change in leadership at the Department could not lead to reinstated higher mark-ups.

Our calculations:

Based on 2024 commissary sales actuals and projections provided to us by NDOC, we estimate that this policy change saves people who are incarcerated and their families at least \$434,000 annually.

The following year, Nevada used the [governmental rulemaking process](#) to reduce the remaining commissary

markups from 66% to a maximum of 35%, further saving families money and increasing access to commissary items. Together, these reforms help to ensure that the government does not profit off incarcerated people needing to buy items for basic daily life in order to fill public coffers.

Our calculations:

A [NDOC Informational Statement](#) on the new regulation estimated that this rule change would mean the department would reduce the money extracted through commissary sales by somewhere between \$1.6 million and \$2 million annually. To be conservative, we use the lower end of this range, estimating \$1,600,000 in costs are prevented annually due to this reform.

Driver's License Fee Waiver for Recently Incarcerated People: In 2023, Nevada passed [AB 195](#), providing that no fees related to driver's license can be assessed against a person released from prison for one year after their release. These fees include: the fee for knowledge/skills testing, fees for late renewal of a license, and original renewal or reinstatement license fees. This enables returning citizens to get licensed and ease their transition back into the community without the obstacle of unpayable license-related fees.

Our calculations:

To estimate the annual impact of reinstatement fees prevented for people recently released from prison, we used NDOC's projections found in the legislation's [fiscal note](#). These projections estimate that those returning to their communities will avoid \$12,841 in costs each year.

Discharging Medical Debt upon Release from Incarceration: In 2025, Nevada passed [SB 88](#), ending the state's harmful practice of saddling returning citizens with medical debt upon release — a policy that created devastating barriers to successful reentry. For years, this debt drained critical resources from already vulnerable communities. Now it will no longer be a factor in people's financial success after incarceration. This legislation also [discharges all outstanding medical debt](#) that was owed by people who had been released from prison prior to passage of the bill, totalling \$12,606,810 in immediate debt relief.

Our calculations:

Based on NDOC's response to a public information request submitted by FFJC,⁴² a total of \$3,976,036 in debt was owed for people released from incarceration between 2022 to 2024 (an average of \$1,325,345 per year). If we assume that the rate of new debt owed in the years after reform remains the same, this would mean that on average, about \$1.3 million in debt would be prevented annually for people released from prison. As this is the best data we currently have, we use this three-year average as a proxy for annual debt prevention in our impact calculations. However, we recognize that due to the additional reforms eliminating various costs of incarceration that Nevada has passed recently, we hope the reforms FFJC advanced in Nevada will ultimately lower people's debt burden upon release from prison in future years.

Public Defender Fees & Payment Plan Fees Elimination: In 2025, Nevada passed [SB 120](#), which ended the public defender fees and payment plan fees charged by courts. Prior to this legislation passing, the amount that courts charged for a public defender [varied widely](#).

Our calculations:

State government data received pursuant to a public information request shows that between 2021-2023, 12 courts from Clark County and Washoe County assessed an average of \$890,437 per year in public defender fees.⁴³ Although we do not have similar assessment data from courts elsewhere in the state, we know that from 2022-2023, eight rural counties *collected* an average of \$109,709 per year.⁴⁴ By adding those totals together, we get \$1,000,146 that will no longer be assessed or collected each year. Given the incomplete data, this is again a conservative estimate of the average annual costs that will be prevented for people in Nevada who need a public defender.

SB 120 also eliminated payment plan fees, which will undoubtedly bring additional significant relief to people who cannot afford to pay their base fines and fees in the first place (and so must go on a payment plan). However, we were unable to find any comprehensive data on how much was assessed or collected in payment plan fees prior to reform, so we do not calculate an impact estimate for this part of the bill.

NEW HAMPSHIRE

Counsel Fee Elimination: New Hampshire included a reform in their annual [FY2026 budget bill](#) that eliminated public counsel fees and forgave all outstanding debt incurred due to the assessment of this fee. This reform also involved [closing the state Office of Cost Containment \(OCC\)](#), whose sole purpose had previously been to collect on this debt. This office closure likely resulted in reduced government spending needs.

Our calculations:

We could not find data on how much was assessed annually for these fees, but a [report](#) from the National Legal Aid & Defender Association (NLADA) shares annual public counsel fee *collections* data from FY2018 to FY2022. Over this five-year period, an **average of \$1,612,397 per year was extracted from people who could not afford an attorney** and needed public defense counsel. We assume this is a reasonable proxy for how much will no longer be extracted annually in future years following this reform; however, it is a conservative estimate because it does not count the relief that people who are charged the fee, but are not able to pay, will also feel in future years. We were also unable to find the amount of outstanding public counsel fee debt that was waived thanks to the reform, underestimating the impact of this reform even further.

NEW JERSEY

State Counsel Fee Elimination: In 2023, New Jersey passed [A 5587 /S 3771](#), a reform that eliminated public defender fees and vacated existing debts incurred due to the assessment of public defender fees. Additionally, the reform vacated existing warrants for unpaid debts stemming from public defender fees, liens on property, and any unsatisfied civil judgments.

Our calculations: Because we could not find data on how much was assessed annually for these fees, we used the legislation's [fiscal note data](#) as an estimate of annual financial relief for justice-involved people. According to the fiscal note, the state had previously been collecting **approximately \$4,000,000 from this fee**. We assume this is a reasonable proxy for how much now will not be extracted from people annually. However, it is a conservative estimate because it does not reflect the number of people who had been charged the fee, but who lacked the ability to pay it. We have to assume that more people will also feel relief through debt burdens being lifted, thanks to the reform.

NEW MEXICO

Juvenile Fine and Fee Elimination: In 2021, New Mexico [passed HB 183](#) to eliminate juvenile fines and fees statewide. Prior to the reform, the government was collecting very little from these fines and fees. The [legislation's fiscal note](#) reports that a total of about \$29,000 was collected across the 5-year span of FY2016-FY2020, or an average of \$5,738 collected per year. This low collection trend is unsurprising given that fines and fees [disproportionately affect](#) children in families with low incomes and that children, by the nature of their minority, rarely have noteworthy incomes of their own.

Our calculations:

Based on the fiscal note data, we expect this reform to prevent costs for families of **at least \$5,738 annually**. Furthermore, this is a conservative estimate of the financial impact that eliminating these fees brings New

Mexico families, as it does not take into account fines and fees that were imposed but not collected. Those who lack the ability to pay will find relief from the elimination of that debt burden, even if they were not counted in the fiscal note.

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): In 2023, New Mexico passed [SB 47](#), which fully repealed failure to pay (FTP) and failure to appear (FTA) suspensions. The reform was retroactive, automatically lifting impacted suspensions and waiving reinstatement fees. The New Mexico Motor Vehicle Division (MVD) reported that [260,000 people's licenses](#) were impacted by the statewide reform, but did not specify if "impacted" meant suspensions on 260,000 licenses were lifted, or if 260,000 licenses were fully reinstated. To be conservative, we assume the data refers to the licenses with suspensions lifted, and that other barriers (such as a suspension unrelated to court debt) may still have kept some individual drivers from fully regaining their license. Thus, we apply our national uptake gap to our earnings regained formula to account for that possibility. Using a 3-year average of MVD data from 2018-2020, we also estimate that in future years at least 64,913 people would have likely had their licenses suspended annually if not for this reform.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$5,946,344,605 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: [260,000 licenses impacted X reform uptake gap of 55.3%] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost earnings* into *regained earnings*] = at least **\$1,156,080,374 in estimated regained earnings due to reform implementation**
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [260,000 licenses X [\\$27 reinstatement fee](#)] = **\$7,020,000 in costs prevented**
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): [64,913 licenses X \$12,700 earnings loss per year] X [5.8 years] = **\$4,781,491,580 in estimated earnings kept over lifetime of reform**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: [64,913 licenses X \$27 fee] = **\$1,752,651 in costs prevented per year**

Notably, the previous year, the city of Santa Fe had [ended the practice](#) of suspending licenses for FTP, but we did not calculate a separate impact for the city in this report so as not to double count the financial relief impact of both city and statewide reforms in Santa Fe.

Post-Adjudication Court Fees Elimination: In 2023, New Mexico passed [HB 139](#), which eliminated all post-adjudication criminal court fees as well as bench warrant fees (thirteen unique fees in total). Previously, these fees were causing devastating financial harm to families, with a [recent survey](#) showing that 80% of respondents reported forgoing basic needs such as food and rent to pay off court debt. Based on data from a University of New Mexico fiscal impact report, New Mexico **courts were previously extracting at least \$15.8 million per year** from justice-involved people.

Our calculations:

In 2023, the Bureau of Business and Economic Research (BBER) at the University of New Mexico [published a report](#) that was commissioned by the New Mexico Sentencing Commission to review the economic and fiscal impacts of fines and fees charged by the New Mexico criminal justice system. That report included an appendix showing annual fee collections, broken down by type of fee, between FY2017 and FY2022. We analyzed this data to determine that **on average over these six years, the state collected \$15,800,275**. We assume this is a reasonable estimate of the amount that the state extracted from New Mexicans annually through post-adjudication fees and bench warrant fees. However, since it only represents annual dollars

collected and not annual dollars assessed, it does not represent the full breadth of financial relief that people now feel from no longer being charged these fees. Given the absence of data on total fee assessments, the full extent of relief from all fees imposed is likely much greater.

Additional Procedural Reforms to Limit or Eliminate Fine and Fee Debt:

HB 139, which eliminated post-adjudication fees, also includes provisions developed in cooperation with the [New Mexico Sentencing Commission](#) that would help further limit or eliminate fine and fee debt. These provisions include:

- mandatory offering of payment plans by courts;
- expanded definition of community service eligible as alternative to payment;
- increased conversion rates for community service and jail stays;
- ensuring mandatory presentence confinement time is credited against outstanding debt; and
- incarceration caps.

Our calculations:

Though we are not able to calculate any impact estimates for these procedural reforms, these provisions certainly create financial relief for people by expanding the options available to people to address and eliminate their fine and fee debt.

Parole Fee Elimination: In 2025, New Mexico passed [SB 375](#), which eliminated the state's monthly parole fee. Although the fee charges could range from \$25-\$150 per month, a New Mexico Department of Corrections (DOC) [presentation](#) reported that the average monthly assessment is \$35, which is the figure we use in our calculations. We estimate this reform **ended the government's extraction of about \$1 million per year** from justice-involved people and their families.

Our calculations:

According to the legislation's [fiscal note](#), New Mexico collected about \$377 thousand in parole fees from people on supervision in FY2018 (the most recent year of data available). However, we can reasonably estimate the larger financial relief impact for both those who were able to pay their fees as well as those who were charged the fees but unable to pay, leaving them with unsolvable debt. The Prison Policy Initiative reported that there were [2,400 people](#) on parole in New Mexico in May 2023 (the most recent data available). We assume this is a reasonable proxy for how many people were previously charged the parole fee monthly. To estimate the total annual amount assessed that people on parole will now no longer be charged, we use the following formula: [2,400 people on parole X \$35 parole fee per month] X [12 months in a year] = **\$1,008,000 in annual fees that are no longer assessed.**

NEW YORK

New York City Jail Phone Call Cost Elimination: In 2018, New York City (NYC) [passed](#) legislation to provide free phone calls for people incarcerated in local jails, becoming the [first](#) major U.S. city to do so, **eliminating an estimated \$7.5 million in charges annually**, based on government call volume estimates. Prior to reform, people in NYC jails were charged [50 cents](#) for the first minute of a phone call, and 5 cents for each additional minute. Now, that money stays with the families instead of going to the government and its vendor, Securus.

Our calculations:

According to the legislation's [fiscal note](#), this practice led to the city extracting **about \$7.5 million per year from families**. Of this amount, \$2.5 million was used to operate and maintain the system via a revenue-share

agreement with Securus, the corporate vendor, while the other \$5 million represented revenue for the city. Now that phone calls are free, incarcerated people and their families no longer need to worry about being able to pay to stay in touch with their loved ones. The impact of this reform is also likely felt beyond those who actually would have paid for the phone calls to include those who would have had to forgo or reduce communications due to the cost.

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2020, New York passed the [Driver's License Suspension Reform Act](#) (DLSRA), which repealed failure to pay (FTP) suspensions for unpaid traffic fines. The reform was retroactive, automatically reinstating impacted licenses (if no other suspensions were in place) and waiving reinstatement fees. We know that the reform lifted 3.1 million suspensions, impacting about [1.4 million New Yorkers](#) (as impacted drivers had on average more than one FTP suspension on their license).

[A 2024 study](#) (Waller et al. 2024) evaluated the impact of this reform by designing a regression analysis of descriptive data on driver's license suspensions from 2017 to understand how the reform would have impacted suspensions if it had been in effect at that time. We use the data and findings from this study to inform our impact calculations below.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created more than \$9,552,069,324 in financial relief for people regaining their licenses upon reform – a significant number that is still extremely conservative given data limitations described below. The [2024 study](#) found that of the 1,149,886 driver's license suspensions that were issued in New York in 2017 for any reason, 11% fewer individuals would have had their license suspended if the 2020 FTP reform had been in effect at the time. (While FTP suspensions account for far more than 11% of suspensions, many people with FTP suspensions also have additional suspensions for other reasons.) This 11% acts as our New York-specific reform uptake gap, helping us understand how many license suspension actions are likely now avoided annually due to the reform. Therefore, we use this in place of the national uptake gap we use in other states, given the unique specificity available in New York.

- *Regained earnings: insufficient data available to calculate an impact.* Our New York-specific reform uptake gap of 11% estimates how many people would have avoided having their license suspended due to the reform, *out of all people with suspensions in New York for any reason*. Therefore, to estimate how many people had their licenses reinstated at the time of reform (2020), we would need to know how many people had suspensions *for any reason* in New York in 2020, and apply our New York-specific reform uptake gap to that population. Although we know that the reform affected about 1.4 million licenses that had FTP suspensions, data was not available on the larger population of licenses that were suspended for any reason at the time of reform, and so we could not calculate an impact estimate for regained earnings in our impact totals. However, given that 1.4 million people's licenses had suspensions lifted upon reform, we know that impact is certainly significant.
- *Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses:* We assume that someone with a FTP suspension at the time of reform would have had to pay a reinstatement fee to lift each suspension (regardless of if it was the only suspension on their license or not). Because data from the New York Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) indicates that [3.1 million](#)⁴⁵ outstanding suspensions were impacted by the reform, we can estimate the impact of waiving fees for all impacted suspensions: [3,100,000 suspensions impacted by reform X [\\$70](#) reinstatement fee] = **\$217,000,000 in estimated one-time reinstatement fee costs prevented upon implementation of reform.**
- *Future earnings kept over the lifetime of reform (5.8 years):* We use data on how many people had driver's licenses suspended for any reason in 2017 (1,149,886) as a proxy for the number of licenses that would have been suspended annually if not for reform. We then apply our New York-specific reform gap

of 11% to estimate that, of 1,149,886 licenses suspended annually, 11% fewer of these licenses would be suspended due to the state FTP reform. This equates to 126,487 individual licenses we can assume would have avoided suspensions and therefore retain annual earnings. Our formula is as follows: [1,149,886 suspensions in NY as of 2017 for any reason] X [11%, the NY-specific number of those would have been impacted by the reform] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year] X [5.8 years]= **\$9,317,066,304 in estimated earnings kept over the lifetime of reform.**

- *Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually:* The [2024 study](#) reports that in 2017 alone, 257,186 people had their licenses suspended for FTP on traffic tickets. We cannot assume this is a reasonable estimate of how many people will now fully avoid getting their license suspended annually post-reform, because some licenses may still be impacted for other reasons than FTP (such as failure to appear in court). However, we do assume that anyone with a FTP suspension has to pay a reinstatement fee to lift each suspension (regardless of if it is the only suspension on their license or not). Therefore, we assume the 2017 data point is a reasonable estimate for how many people will no longer be issued a FTP suspension annually (even if their license is still suspended for other reasons), and who therefore will avoid reinstatement fee costs for those suspensions annually. We thus calculate the following reinstatement fee relief impact: [257,186 people with FTP suspension] X [\$70 reinstatement fee] = **\$18,003,020 in costs prevented annually.**

Expanding Statewide Access to Payment Plans: In addition to ending FTP suspensions, the [Driver's License Suspension Reform Act](#) (DLSRA) also [established installment payment plans](#) for all traffic fines, fees, and mandatory surcharges. Provisions in the legislation allow drivers to petition the court to waive or reduce the total amount of fines, fees, or surcharges owed, and caps monthly payment amounts at \$25 or 2% of net monthly income, whichever is higher. The legislation also gives judges the discretion to waive any traffic fines, fees or surcharges, but we do not have data on whether or how often this is happening in practice in New York courtrooms currently.

Our calculations:

Though there is no direct financial impact that we could calculate for this reform, due to its varying nature, it is an important step taken to address barriers people face to accessing payment plans and resolving their fine and fee debt, and thereby creates additional financial relief for those impacted by fines and fees in New York.

Buffalo City Traffic Ticket Fees Elimination: In 2020, the City of Buffalo passed legislation [eliminating 15 local fees](#) on traffic tickets that had been created in 2018. [Examples](#) of the fees eliminated include a public safety fee, a driver responsibility fee, and an administrative fee. [A 2019 news article](#) reported that these fees added at least \$100 in charges for virtually all traffic cases.

Our calculations:

We could not find any public data on the total annual amount imposed or collected through these fees prior to reform, so we were unable to calculate a financial relief impact estimate. Nonetheless, we know that eliminating these fees makes a real difference to the drivers who otherwise would have been saddled with what can add up to hundreds of dollars of fees in order to generate revenue for the city.

Buffalo City School Zone Speed Cameras Elimination: In 2021, the City of Buffalo passed a [resolution](#) to eliminate school zone speed cameras, and replace cameras with speed bumps. During the year prior to reform, the speed cameras were operating in up to twenty school zones. The City [found](#) that the cameras were disproportionately installed in school zones “within high-poverty, low-income, and minority census tracts” and that many of the selected school zones had low rates of vehicle crashes during school hours, signaling that the program acted more as a revenue generator than a public safety effort. Due to the reform,

drivers no longer run the risk of incurring \$50 tickets, and the law called for drivers who had received tickets in the 90 days prior to the resolution's passage to be reimbursed.

Our calculations:

A City [impact evaluation](#) of the speed camera program showed that the Buffalo Parking Violations Bureau issued 24,011 speed camera citations in the first year that the program was implemented (March 2020 - March 2021), each of which carried a \$50 fine. Assuming that number would have been similar in future years, this means the reform **prevented approximately \$2,429,450 in fine assessments annually** (using the calculation [48,589 tickets] X [\$50 fine per ticket]). This number is also a conservative estimate of annual assessments, given that the COVID-19 pandemic caused lower traffic patterns and some pauses in camera activity in this particular year. Therefore, we assume this 2020-2021 assessment total is a reasonably conservative estimate of how much in fines are now prevented annually due to the camera program ending.

Parole Fees Elimination: New York included language in its legislatively approved [FY 2022 budget](#) that eliminated the state's \$30/month parole fee. We estimate this reform **ended the government's extraction of at least \$9.2 million per year** from formerly incarcerated people re-entering their communities and eased the impact on their families.

Our calculations:

According to the [US Bureau of Justice Statistics](#), at the end of 2022 there were 25,600 people on parole in New York. We use this as our figure for the number of people on parole who will no longer have to pay this fee annually thanks to the reform.⁴⁶ Our formula for the impact of eliminating New York's parole fee is: [25,600 people] X [\$30 fee per month] X [12 months in a year] = at least **\$9,216,000 in costs prevented annually for people on parole.**

Prison Phone Call Cost Elimination: In 2025, in response to multi-year advocacy by FFJC and our partners, New York State [announced](#) that it would make phone calls from prisons free, so that people who are incarcerated can keep in touch with their loved ones at no cost. Prior to this reform, people in prison could make three free 15-minute calls per week, but any calls beyond this limit cost 2.4 cents per minute, plus service fees. It is estimated that this practice was charging incarcerated people and their families **at least \$9.9 million annually.** Now, that money stays with the families instead going to the government and its vendor, Securus.

Our calculations:

The New York State Assembly proposed including this reform in the FY2022-FY2023 budget. Though it did not get adopted in the final budget that year, the [budget proposal](#) estimated that eliminating the cost of prison phone calls would have a fiscal impact of \$9.9 million in one fiscal year. We assume this is a reasonable proxy for the amount that incarcerated people and their families will no longer have to pay annually now that the reform has occurred. Some advocates estimated the collective relief to families to be [\\$13 million](#). Given the two different estimates, to be conservative, we use the lower impact estimate in our impact totals, but recognize the amount could be significantly higher.

OHIO

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2024, Ohio passed [HB 29](#), a failure to pay (FTP) reform which eliminated driver's license suspensions for failure to pay a court fine or fee related to a minor misdemeanor traffic or vehicle equipment offense. The reform was automatic and retroactive. Per the [Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles](#), one month into implementation 429,501 suspensions/blocks were removed, and \$8,380,681 in reinstatement fees were discharged. All told, the reform impacted 170,510 Ohioans in some way, with 31,432 people either regaining valid licenses or becoming eligible for full reinstatement after completing a standard renewal test process.

According to a 2025 FOIA request,⁴⁷ an average of 57,867 people received license suspensions each year between 2019-2024 for failure to pay (FTP) or failure to appear in court (FTA). However, we are not able to pinpoint how many of these suspensions were specifically for FTP, so we could not use this data to calculate an estimate of the annual earnings kept in future years due to reform.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$261,065,672 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.

- Regained earnings: [31,432 people with valid licenses due to reform]. X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings to *regained* earnings]. = **\$252,684,991 in estimated regained earnings due to reform implementation.**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: According to a [statement](#) by one of the bill's cosponsors,⁴⁸ **\$8,380,681 in reinstatement fees were prevented** due to the reform being automatic and retroactive. We accept that figure without further calculations.
- Earnings kept over the lifetime of reform: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*

OKLAHOMA

Court Fees Elimination: In 2025, Oklahoma passed HB 1460, which eliminated several criminal justice fees that saddled Oklahomans with debts they were unable to pay. Specifically, the legislation:

- Eliminated an electronic monitoring fee of up to \$300/month;
- Eliminated a \$40 nonrefundable application fee for defendants who, because they are living in poverty, were requesting legal representation by the Oklahoma Indigent Defense System;
- Repealed several other fees, including a DPS Database fee, Revolving Fund fee, Drug Cleansing fee, and Drug Abuse Treatment and Education fee; and
- Allowed judges to waive the costs of prosecution applied to defendants (known as the District Attorney Supervision Fee).

According to the [fiscal note](#), this reform **prevents costs of at least \$3.3 million annually** from being extracted from defendants in court. Depending on how many supervision fees are waived by judges, this impact could increase up to at least \$12.5 million annually.

Our calculations:

The legislation's fiscal note stated that the government had previously been extracting **an average of \$3,285,596 annually** through the fees that were eliminated in this reform. We assume this is a reasonable proxy for the minimum amount of cost that will be prevented annually due to reform. However, it is an extremely conservative estimate, as it (1) does not count the relief that people who are charged the fee but are not able to pay will also feel; and (2) does not account for the relief that will be felt due to any District Attorney supervision fees that are waived by judges under the new law. The fiscal note indicated that if the reform passed, the government expected to stop collecting at least \$9.2 million annually from the District Attorney supervision fee. If all of these fees were waived annually, this would increase the annual financial relief felt by justice-involved people to at least \$12.5 million. However, because the reform ultimately gives judges the discretion to waive this fee – it does not mandate it – we are unable to realistically estimate how many people may receive relief. Therefore, we do not include this relief in our impact totals.

OREGON

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2020, Oregon passed [HB 4210](#), prohibiting driver's license suspensions for failure to pay. The reform was not retroactive or automatic, meaning people with existing suspensions were not initially impacted by the reform. However, moving forward, thousands of people per year now avoid driver's license suspensions thanks to this reform. According to the state Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), Oregon issued 32,280 suspensions for FTP in 2017.⁴⁹ We assume this is a reasonable proxy for the number of suspensions avoided annually due to reform; however, in our earnings kept formula below, we incorporate our licenses-to-suspensions uptake gap to translate this number of annual FTP *suspensions* into the number of unique *licenses*. (The suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap is not needed to calculate the reinstatement costs prevented annually because we assume that people pay one fee per suspension on their license.)

Following this reform, two subsequent traffic fine remission orders issued by Oregon Governors (Governor Brown in [2021](#) and Governor Kotek in [2023](#)) created a pathway for people with pre-existing FTP or FTA suspensions to get their license reinstated. Together, these remission orders forgave at least \$7.8 million in outstanding traffic-related fines and fees.⁵⁰ This debt [had previously led to FTP or FTA suspensions](#) for approximately [18,000 people](#). Once courts processed the fine remissions, they sent suspension clearance notices to the state DMV, effectively lifting all of these FTP suspensions. This meant that the 18,000 impacted people could potentially get their licenses reinstated if there were no other suspensions or issues with their licenses. However, the Governors' orders did not make the process of getting full reinstatement an automatic one, and local advocates note that only a portion of this population likely got their license fully reinstated as a result.⁵¹ The executive orders also did not waive the [\\$85 reinstatement fee](#) for people getting their licenses back, creating an additional barrier to full reinstatement. Therefore, we apply our reform uptake gap (55.3%) in our calculation for regained earnings below, to account for those whose suspensions were lifted through the fine remission orders but whose licenses were not fully reinstated due to other remaining barriers to reinstatement.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that the combination of the executive orders and the legislation created more than \$910,492,134 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform, and **waived at least \$7.8 million in outstanding fines and fees.**

- Regained earnings due to the Governor remission orders: [suspensions on 18,000 licenses lifted X 55.3% reform uptake gap] x [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings into *regained* earnings] = **\$80,036,334 in estimated regained earnings due to reform implementation.**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses from the Governor remission orders: *not applicable, as reinstatement fee was not waived for impacted licenses.*
- Earnings kept over the lifetime of legislative reform: [32,280 suspensions / 2.9 suspensions-to-licenses uptake gap] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year x 5.8 years] = **\$819,912,000 earnings kept over the lifetime of reform.**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually due to the legislative reform: [32,280 suspensions] x [\[\\$85 reinstatement fee\]](#) = **\$2,743,800 in costs prevented annually.**
- Underlying fine and fee debt discharged through the Governor remission orders: [at least [\\$1.8 million](#) discharged through the 2021 order] + at least [\\$6 million](#) discharged through the 2023 order] = **at least \$7,800,000 in outstanding fines and fees discharged.**

PENNSYLVANIA

Philadelphia Jail Costs Reforms: Philadelphia participated in the 2020-21 [Cities and Counties for Fines and Fees Justice \(CCFFJ\) cohort](#) run by FFJC and the San Francisco Financial Justice Project to enact local fine and fee reform. As a result of these advocacy efforts, Philadelphia's [FY 2022 budget](#) reduced the financial burden on people in city jails by eliminating the \$1 commissary markup fee and offering free 15-minute phone calls each day, plus weekly 1-hour video calls. Before these reforms, a survey found that 75% of currently or formerly incarcerated people spent at least \$50 per week in jail, and 90% struggled to afford commissary items. As a result, **at least \$3 million that previously went to the city will now stay with incarcerated individuals and their families.**

Our calculations:

The Philadelphia Mayor's FY2022 budget proposal [reported](#) that prior to reform, at least \$3 million was being extracted from families annually due to the costs addressed in the reform. We assume government-cited estimates are a reasonable proxy for the annual relief that families will feel in future years.

TEXAS

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2019, Texas passed [HB 2048](#), repealing the Driver Responsibility Program (DRP), which had added surcharges onto certain driving-related offenses and mandated automatic suspension for failure to pay that surcharge (FTP). The reform was retroactive, automatically waiving all outstanding surcharges related to the DRP. According to a letter from a Texas Department of Safety staffer, a total of **\$2,471,321,151** in outstanding DRP surcharges was waived upon implementation of the reform. According to a [local news report](#) citing the Texas Department of Public Safety, a total of 1,383,123 people had outstanding license suspensions that were impacted by the reform. Of those, 634,933 people were eligible for reinstatement under the reform and had no other fees preventing their reinstatement. Another 350,027 people were said to be eligible for reinstatement after paying a one-time reinstatement fee (unrelated to DRP suspensions). Additionally, another 398,163 people were reported to be eligible for reinstatement once they resolved other non-DRP-related suspensions.

Our calculations:

We assume, based on the news reporting, that 634,933 people would be eligible to feel the impact of regained earnings in our impact calculations. **In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$7,713,923,331 in financial relief upon implementation.**

- Regained earnings: [634,933 people regaining their licenses] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings into *regained* earnings] = **an estimated \$5,104,289,880 in regained earnings due to the reform:**
- One-time costs waived: **\$2,471,321,151** in outstanding DRP surcharges was waived upon implementation of the reform.⁵²
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: *not applicable, as the DRP suspensions did not appear to have a specific reinstatement fee imposed prior to reform*
- Earnings kept over the lifetime of reform: *available data insufficient to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *available data insufficient to calculate an impact*

UTAH

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): In 2021, Utah passed [HB 0143](#), which fully repealed

failure to pay (FTP) suspensions and partially repealed failure to appear (FTA) suspensions. The reform was not retroactive, so the licensing statuses of those with outstanding suspensions at the time of reform were not impacted.

We do not have data on the number of people who were annually suspended for FTP or FTA, but the legislation's [fiscal note](#) estimated that approximately 10,625 people could avoid paying the \$40 reinstatement fee annually due to the reform. We use this population as a proxy for the annual number of people who will feel financial relief due to this reform in future years. This results in a conservative impact estimate, as it only counts people who had licenses suspended for reasons addressed in the reform *and* who paid the reinstatement fee. It does not include people who had licenses suspended for reasons addressed in the reform, but who could not afford the reinstatement fee. We know that this group of people unaccounted for in the fiscal note will also feel the impact of keeping their licenses active and thus not losing out on earnings each year.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created **at least \$783,062,500 in financial relief over the lifetime of reform.**

- Regained earnings: *not applicable, as the reform was not retroactive*
- Reinstatement Fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: *not applicable, as the reform was not retroactive*
- Earnings kept over lifetime of reform (5.8 years): [10,625 licenses X \$12,700] X [5.8 years] = an **estimated \$782,637,500 in earnings kept over lifetime of reform**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: [10,625 licenses X \$40 reinstatement fee] = **\$425,000 in costs prevented annually**

VIRGINIA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2019, Virginia passed [HB 1700](#), which froze the practice of suspending driver's licenses for failure to pay (FTP) for one year and ordered existing licenses suspended for FTP be reinstated if the impacted license had no other suspensions or eligibility issues. The reform was automatic and waived the reinstatement fee of \$145. One year later, the passage of [HB 1](#) made the FTP reform permanent. According to one [news article](#) citing data provided by the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV), 626,845 people could potentially drive again due to HB 1700. However, it is not clear from the language used in [other public information](#) from the DMV if there may be other barriers to reinstatement for a portion of this population. To be conservative, we assume the data refers to the licenses with suspensions lifted, but that other barriers (such as a separate suspension unrelated to court debt) may still have kept some individual drivers from fully regaining their license. Thus, we apply our national reform uptake gap to our earnings regained formula to account for that possibility.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$2,878,135,610 in financial relief upon implementation.

- Regained earnings: [626,845 people with impacted licenses X 55.3% reform uptake gap] X [\$12,700 earnings loss per year X 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings into *regained* earnings] = an **estimated \$2,787,243,085 in regained earnings due to the reform**
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses: [625,845 impacted licenses] X

[\$145 reinstatement fee] = **at least \$90,892,525** in costs prevented. (Note, our estimate is likely an undercount because it measures *people* and not *suspensions* and we assume that the reinstatement fee must be paid per suspension.)

- Earnings kept over the lifetime of reform: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*

Installment Payment Agreement Reform: In 2025, Virginia passed [HB 1661](#), which allowed courts to provide standardized monthly payment plans for people who owed fines or fees, setting default repayment at \$25 a month (with the possibility of a higher amount, depending on an ability to pay determination). This amount can also be “less than \$25” a month if courts determine that the person is indigent.

Our calculations:

We did not calculate an impact estimate for this reform because too much depends on judicial discretion to be able to reasonably estimate a population impacted or the total dollar impact. Nonetheless, it remains an important reform worth highlighting.

WASHINGTON

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP): In 2021, Washington passed [SB 5226](#), which partially repealed failure to pay (FTP) suspensions for non-criminal traffic infractions, and created new options for people to demonstrate an inability to pay and to request payment plans for outstanding fines and fees. This followed on the heels of an older law, passed in 2013 (well before FFJC was founded), that eliminated failure to appear (FTA) suspensions related to non-moving traffic violations. SB 5226 did not go into effect until 2023, nearly two years after passage. Before that, however, in June 2021, a Washington [court issued an order](#) enjoining all FTP and FTA suspensions in non-criminal cases because there was no system for determining a person's ability to pay. The order directed the state to rescind all suspended for non-criminal FTPs and FTAs and waive the \$75 reinstatement fees. The order stayed in place until SB 5226 took effect, presumably preventing any new FTP suspensions from occurring after June 2021. Because this court ruling and its impact paralleled SB 5226, effectively moving up its implementation date, we consider the financial relief impact to those with FTP suspensions from the date of the court ruling as relevant to our report.

Our calculations:

We were unable to obtain data on how many FTP suspensions were issued each year pre-reform, and so are unable to calculate an impact estimate for the 2021 FTP repeal legislation (SB 5226.)

We also attempted to calculate the number and impact of FTP suspensions that were lifted through the subsequent court ruling, but insufficient data was available to do so. At the time of the court ruling, a 2021 ACLU of Washington [report](#) cited that 100,000 people with FTP or FTA suspensions would have their licenses reinstated as a direct result of the ruling. However, it is not specified how many of these licenses were suspended for FTP (which was partially repealed in the 2021 legislation that FFJC supported) versus FTA (which was addressed in the 2013 legislation, passed well before FFJC's founding.) Without being able to isolate the number and impact of just the FTP suspensions that were lifted, we risk overestimating the earnings impact for those regaining their licenses beyond the impact of SB 5226. Therefore, in order to be conservative, we do not include a regained earnings impact for this reform in our total impact calculations. Nonetheless, the legislation and court ruling undoubtedly led to hundreds of millions in earnings regained as people had their licenses restored, representing a significant impact for people in Washington.

Supervision Fees Elimination: In 2022, Washington passed [HB 1818](#), which eliminated its \$30 per month parole fee. We estimate this reform ended the government's extraction of **at least \$1.6 million per year** from

justice-involved people and their families.

Our calculations:

The legislation's [fiscal note](#) reported that over two years (2021-2023), the government generated \$3,251,000 from supervision fees. By taking the average of those two years, we estimate that approximately \$1,625,500 per year was extracted from people in supervision programs. Since this only measures the amount that was charged *and* collected, it leaves out supervision debt that may still be outstanding. This, therefore, is a conservative estimate for the annual costs that people will avoid being charged in future years due to reform.

Restitution Fund Creation: King County, Washington participated in the first [Cities and Counties for Fines and Fees Justice \(CCFFJ\) cohort](#) run by FFJC, the San Francisco Financial Justice Project, and Policy Link to enact local fine and fee reform. As a result of these advocacy efforts, King County's [FY 2021-2022 budget](#) established an innovative restitution fund, the first publicly-supported restitution fund in the country. The fund was created to support access of young people to social services, support people who have been harmed by an offense, and provide restitution payments on behalf of youth who cannot afford to pay the restitution directly themselves.

Our calculations:

There was insufficient data to estimate the direct financial impact from this reform. Nonetheless, it is an innovative policy reform for addressing barriers people face when they cannot afford to pay the amount of restitution ordered, while ensuring that victims are supported.

DNA Testing Fees Elimination: In 2022, Washington passed [HB 1169](#), which eliminated the \$100 fee required for taking a DNA sample from those found guilty of certain crimes. We estimate this reform ended the government's extraction of **at least \$482,000 annually** from justice-involved people and their families.

Our calculations:

The legislation's [fiscal note](#) reported that the average annual revenue from the DNA sample fee was about \$482,000. Since this only measures the amount that was charged *and* collected, it leaves out debt totals from people who were assessed the fee but unable to pay it. Therefore, it is likely far less than the true annual assessments that people will avoid being burdened with in future years, thanks to this reform.

WEST VIRGINIA

Driver's License Suspension Reform (FTP + FTA): West Virginia passed two bills between 2020-2022 that, together, repealed failure to pay (FTP) suspensions and retroactively voided pre-existing failure to pay (FTP) and failure to appear (FTA) suspensions. We estimate that drivers who had their licenses restored due to these reforms **have seen at least \$810 million in financial relief**.

- In 2020, West Virginia passed [HB 4958](#), which repealed driver's license suspensions for FTP. The reform was retroactive, but not automatic, and no fee waiver was included for people with existing suspensions. [Per the West Virginia Center on Budget & Policy](#), an estimated 100,000 people were impacted by this legislation. Under the bill, suspensions can be removed by appearing in court, paying the \$25 reinstatement fee and setting up a payment plan, or by paying the amount in full. The reform was not automatic and provided no reinstatement fee waiver. So, in our calculations for earnings regained due to this reform, we apply our reform uptake gap to account for the likelihood that not all 100,000 impacted people had their licenses fully reinstated after reform passed.
- In 2022, West Virginia passed [HB 4361](#), which put a 5-year cap on driver's license suspensions for FTA. This reform [retroactively voided](#) 365,107 suspensions impacting 80,161 drivers who had their licenses suspended for FTP or FTA prior to July 2016. The reform was meant to be automatic, but it is unclear whether there may

have been other barriers to reinstatement for a portion of this population. To be conservative, we assume that other barriers (such as a separate suspension unrelated to court debt) may still have kept some of the 80,161 impacted drivers from fully regaining their license. Thus, we apply our national reform uptake gap to our earnings regained formula to account for that possibility. Importantly, the 2022 reform does not appear to impact failure to appear suspensions moving forward - it only impacts licenses with outstanding FTA suspensions at the time of reform.

Our calculations:

In total, we estimate that this reform created at least \$810,206,891 in financial relief just in the first year of implementation.

Regained earnings:

- 2020 reform: [100,000 impacted drivers x 55.3% reform uptake gap] x [\$12,700 earnings loss per year x 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings to *regained* earnings] = **an estimated \$444,646,298 earnings regained** upon reform implementation
- 2022 reform: [80,161 impacted drivers x 55.3% reform uptake gap] x [\$12,700 earnings loss per year x 63.3% to translate *lost* earnings to *regained* earnings] = **an estimated \$356,432,919 earnings regained** upon reform implementation

Reinstatement fee costs prevented for those with impacted licenses:

- 2020 reform: *not applicable, as the reform did not waive reinstatement fees*
- 2022 reform: [365,107 suspension files closed due to reform] X [\$25 reinstatement fee] = **\$9,127,675 in one-time fees prevented for those regaining their licenses**

Earnings kept over the lifetime of reform:

- 2020 reform: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- 2022 reform: *not applicable, as the reform did not repeal future suspensions*

Reinstatement fee costs prevented annually:

- 2020 reform: *insufficient data available to calculate an impact*
- 2022 reform: *not applicable, as the reform did not repeal future suspensions*

Endnotes

1 The type and number of fees imposed vary from state to state and often by locality within a state and are sometimes referred to as costs, surcharges or assessments. This report uses the term fees to refer to all of those monetary charges. Examples include warrant fees, booking fees, room-and-board fees for jail or prison, medical co-pays, public defender fees, jury fees, prosecution fees, fees for testing evidence, fees to pay witnesses called to testify against the defendant, court security fees, fees to fund crime victims' services, law library fees, drug testing fees, probation and parole supervision fees, and fees that go to non-justice sectors such as hospitals, fire departments and EMT services, just to name a few.

2 [A 2017 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights](#) report noted that municipalities that rely heavily on revenue from fines and fees have a higher proportion of African American and Latino residents than other municipalities. A review of [Alabama court data](#) found Black Alabamians have an average of \$3,961 of court debt, and those who applied to the Alabama Bureau of Pardons and Paroles to restore their voting rights were more likely to be denied, solely due to court debt, than non-Black applicants.

3 For example, [an economic analysis](#) of driver's license suspensions in Florida - a state that continues to suspend licenses for unpaid court debt - estimated that the state lost \$491 million dollars in consumer spending as a result of these suspensions. If these suspensions had been repealed, those dollars would have spurred local economies and increased government tax collections.

4 This is calculated by using the [USDA cost of groceries](#) for a family of four, from December 2025.

5 In our overall totals, the impact of preventing fee or fine costs is calculated only for a single year after each reform is enacted, due to the difficulty in predicting its stability in future years. We were unable to create a compounding constant in the fee context that we felt was sufficiently reliable. This, therefore, undercounts the total financial impact,

given that there will be some level of fee avoidance for populations beyond the first year of reform.

6 Future impacts can be estimated based on [research](#) that shows the median length of a suspension (as calculated for the years 2010-2017) is estimated at 5.8 years for failure to pay, and 11.4 years for failure to appear. This potential for driver's license suspension to limit someone's earnings trajectory over time is significant and stark. We have chosen to take the more conservative estimate of 5.8 years as the basis of our analyses.

7 For example, if a government source identified a dollar range for a particular fee, we use the low end of that range in our calculation for estimating the impact of eliminating the fee, although any amount higher than the minimum would have increased the financial impact of the reform.

8 We include reinstatement fee waiver impacts from the Free to Drive campaigns in this section discussion fee elimination, as they are technically fees that are eliminated. However, we also discuss this impact in the following section of the report, which deals with driver's license suspension reforms. However, we are careful not to double count the financial impact in our overall total charts at the beginning of this report.

9 Rent estimates calculated using the American Community Survey [2024 estimates](#) of the median cost of rent (including utilities and fuel) from 2024.

10 For these calculations, we use the most recent year of data available and, where we had multiple years of data, we calculate multi-year averages to take into account trends over time.

11 We identified these populations from multiple types of sources, including: legislative reports or fiscal notes, Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) requests for data, published academic papers, news articles citing government data, and internal communications. Where possible, we prioritized data points from FOIA requests, fiscal notes, and published academic research papers that used data provided directly by government agencies.

12 Note that even within this [study](#), this statistic is on the lower range of possible earnings loss estimates, so we are confident that using the \$12,700 earnings loss figure gives us a conservative estimate in this analysis. A separate [study](#) from researchers in North Carolina estimated the annual earnings loss associated with a driver's license suspension for failure to appear or failure to pay between \$10,000 and \$14,000—reaffirming that the \$12,700 estimate is a conservative one.

13 See footnote 6.

14 This figure does not include estimates of the impact on tens of thousands of drivers affected by license reform in California, Mississippi, or other states that enacted such reforms prior to FFJC's founding.

15 This estimate is based on a national average of public university in-state tuition and fees of \$11,950 per year, [as published by the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities](#). We take that figure and multiplied it by four to estimate the total cost of attendance without financial aid as being \$47,800.

16 We also did not calculate the impact of any FTA or FTP court fees that may have been imposed alongside a license suspension, as we did not see any language in any reform legislation that specifically spoke to waiving these fees. However, to the extent that in practice these fees may have been waived upon reform, there would be additional fee relief. For instance, [one analysis](#) showed that the total financial loss due to failure to appear in court is \$1,394 per individual.

17 In this paper, we consider automatic reform implementation to mean that drivers who were eligible for license reinstatement had licenses restored without any additional steps required of impacted drivers. For example, if impacted drivers had to obtain eligibility paperwork from the court, pay a fee, or visit their Department of Motor Vehicles to initiate the reinstatement process, this would not be considered an automatic implementation process.

18 Because the data associated with California's reform uptake gap is from 2016 reform, before

the founding of FFJC and the creation of the Free to Drive campaign, we do not include the total impact of this reform in the scope of this report. However, because sufficient data exists to calculate the state's individual uptake gap for license reinstatements due to this litigation, we do use that figure as one of the six data points to inform our average national reform uptake gap. See appendix for more details on each data point.

19 The [average length of stay](#) in state prison is 2.7 years, compared to the median [driver's license suspension](#) of 5.8 years.

20 See Appendix B for research methodology supporting this figure.

21 Reforms include FTP or FTA suspension repeal in Delaware, Illinois, Maine, New York, Ohio, and West Virginia. See appendix B for more details on those reforms.

22 Each driver's license is unique to a specific person, even if it has multiple suspensions on it.

23 Arkansas, Hawaii, Indiana, Montana, and California (where lack of data is due to the fact that their repeal of license suspensions for Failure to Appear won't take effect until 2027),

24 [Research shows](#) that on average, it costs at least 121 times more to collect criminal fines and fees than it costs the IRS to collect taxes.

25 See Table 6 for a list of states contributing to this figure.

26 The impacted suspension and reinstatements data here relate to a [2016 lawsuit](#) in which Bay Area residents with FTP or FTA suspensions related to traffic tickets sued the CA Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV). The court ruling led to the [DMV lifting](#) 550,000 drivers' license suspensions statewide, but of that number, only 426,000 drivers were eligible for full reinstatement because some had additional suspensions on their licenses. Because FFJC was not involved in this original lawsuit, we do not include the impact of this court ruling in our full report impact totals, but we do use it in calculating the license reinstatement uptake gap as it is a valuable data point for arriving at a national average.

27 While our calculations for the other five states use data on how many people actually were impacted by DLS reform upon implementation, our New York data point is derived from a slightly different approach. For this state, we apply the regression coefficient calculated [in a study](#) of New York's 2020 DLS reform legislation to descriptive data on license suspensions from 2017 (as reported in the same study.) Doing so allows us to simulate how many people in 2017 would have been able to fully avoid any license suspensions if the reform had been in place at that time, and compare that population to the number of people with FTP suspensions in 2017, to estimate the New York uptake gap in this table.

28 The [average length of stay](#) in state prison is 2.7 years (Kaeble, 2021), compared to the median [driver's license suspension](#) of 5.8 years (Crozier & Garrett, 2019).

29 See notes on Arizona reform in Appendix B below.

30 We recognize that this uptake gap may not be statistically representative, given the sample size, but it is the best estimate we could develop from the available data.

31 The data on impacted licenses related to Maine's 2018 DLS reform is a valuable data point for our suspensions per license uptake gap. However, because the reform occurred before FFJC's Free to Drive campaign was founded and FFJC did not have involvement in this reform, we do not consider the impact of the reform in our total financial impact estimates in this report.

32 Data not available online, but documentation on file with authors.

33 Information shared with authors through email with local advocates.

34 The Miami-Dade Corrections and Rehabilitation Department more recently cited an average daily jail population of 4,710 [in its approved FY2025-2026 budget](#). However, as the reform passed years earlier in 2022, we use the smaller average daily jail population of 4,400 that the government cited at the time of legislation consideration and passage.

35 Request For Proposal (RFP) on file with author.

36 "Shifting Suspensions in Illinois." Chicago Jobs Council: Report not publicly available but a copy is on file with authors.

37 Maureen R. Waller et al., "Predation and the Disproportionate Risk of Driver's License Suspensions in Economically and Racially Marginalized Communities," *Socius: Sociological Research for a Dynamic World*, 10, (2024) <https://doi.org/10.1177/23780231241234632> ; Nina R. Joyce et al., "Individual and geographic variation in Driver's license suspensions: Evidence of disparities by race, ethnicity and income," *Journal of Transport & Health*, Volume 19, (September 2020) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jth.2020.100933>.

38 Note that the Michigan Secretary of State [sent out notifications](#) to impacted drivers upon reform, urging them to check their licensing status by obtaining an updated driving record copy at a cost of \$16. If each impacted driver did this, that would be a cost of [348,893 people] X [\$16 fee] = \$5,582,288 of cost to individuals, slightly lowering the net financial relief due to the reform's reinstatement fee elimination component.

39 Information from Worth Rises staff shared with FFJC staff via email and on file with the authors.

40 Here we use provided data on traffic warrants for cases in Las Vegas Municipal Court, but we do not have similar data for additional traffic warrants issued by Las Vegas Justice Court. Therefore, our calculations illustrate a partial picture of Las Vegas but not a comprehensive one, making our estimates even more conservative.

41 Data on file with authors.

42 Data on file with authors.

43 Data from individual Nevada courts on file with authors.

44 Data from individual Nevada courts on file with authors.

45 This data point was emailed by personnel at the New York DMV to FFJC staff and is on file with the authors.

46 A separate reform in 2022 – [the Less Is More Act](#)– reduced the number of people on parole throughout 2022, so we chose to use a December 2022 snapshot here, which reflects the parole population decrease after the implementation of the Less Is More Act, as a conservative annual estimate for the number of people who we reasonably can expect to be impacted annually by this reform in the future.

47 Data provided by the Ohio Bureau of Motor Vehicles on file with the author.

48 An email sent to FFJC staff by Ohio advocates shows a public records response letter from the BMV which reports the same data points, so we assume the BMV is the original agency reporting this data (email is on file with author).

49 Data from the Department of Motor Vehicle was emailed to FFJC staff by local advocates and is on file with the authors. It is not otherwise publicly available.

50 [According to the Oregon Judicial Department \(OJD\)](#), about 84% of that outstanding debt was already considered uncollectible.

51 Email from local advocates, on file with the authors.

52 Letter on file with authors.

Key Citations / Resources

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