



ASK THE CANDIDATES

What will you do to help eradicate burdensome fines and fees charged by the criminal justice system that keep people trapped in a perpetual cycle of debt and custody?

- **For lawmakers**—Do you plan to pass legislation to eliminate court-imposed fees? Do you think that punishing (i.e. jailing, suspending driver's license, extending probation) someone for failure to pay makes fiscal sense?
- **For court actors**—What is your plan to establish a consistent standard for how or when fines are imposed, such as a sliding scale for assessment based on an individual's ability to pay?
- **For local decision-makers**—How do you plan to stop fines and fees from preventing community members from obtaining jobs, housing, or other opportunities?

NORTH CAROLINA'S LAWMAKERS CAN TAKE ACTION TO ENSURE THAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE NOT TRAPPED IN AN ENDLESS CYCLE OF DEBT TO THE COURT SYSTEM.

FACTS YOU CAN USE

- In North Carolina, court costs have skyrocketed. Court-imposed fees have increased 400% over the past twenty years. The General Court of Justice fee has increased 260% (for district court) and 243% (for superior court) since 1995.
- Court costs criminalize people for being poor. Poor people are still regularly incarcerated because they cannot pay their court debts, even though debtor's prison in the United States was banned under federal law in 1833. Poor people also face other consequences for non-payment, such as suspension of their driver's licenses and extension of probation.
- People impacted by court costs are not getting the relief they need. Judges have the authority to waive many court costs, however judges only waive costs in about 8% of cases statewide. According to a 2017 study, only about 6% of drivers with licenses revoked for failure to appear or failure to pay regained their licenses.

DID YOU GET A REAL, MEANINGFUL ANSWER TO YOUR QUESTION?

If not, here are some follow-up questions that might help you get a more specific answer:

- Please be more specific about the actions you will take to implement your plan.
- You have mentioned ways individuals might take action to benefit themselves. Please focus your response on how you will ensure North Carolina institutions and public policies can better support those affected.
- Can you tell me about what principles or values will guide your decisions on this issue?
- What are the problems you see in the current approach?

TELL LAWMAKERS TO END THE CYCLE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE DEBT.

VISIT WWW.NCJUSTICE.ORG/ELECTION2020 TO SHARE THE ANSWERS YOU RECEIVED.