

Opportunity & Prosperity for All

Fair Chance

The FAIR CHANCE CRIMINAL JUSTICE team partners with impacted people, congregations, concerned community members, advocacy organizations, and decision makers to make the criminal legal system more fair—from arrest to reentry.



OUR WORK HAS IMPACT:

Our core goals are to improve the procedures, practices, and policies of the criminal justice system so people are treated more fairly and to ensure people exiting the criminal justice system are able to successfully reintegrate into their families and communities. As part of our recent initiatives, we have:

- **Played a major role in producing** the 4th Annual Vigil for Freedom and Racial Justice, a 32-day vigil consisting of in-person and virtual events designed to increase partner and public understanding of those harmed by incarceration and encourage state decisionmakers to use their power to address those harms—including but not limited to the Governor's power to grant clemency.
- **Maintained** www.resolvetrafficdebtnc.org, to help people seeking to prevent or overcome debt-based driver's license suspension. In the past year over 44,000 people have visited the website, with 35 sharing their stories on the site.
- **Initiated the Fair Chance Fellowship**, a 10-week program for directly impacted advocates to build policy advocacy skills and capacity. Level I was held in spring and Level II in fall of 2023.
- **Promoted and advanced several bills** including SB 565-Remove Barriers to Jobs and Housing, which would streamline the automatic expunction process, and HB 888-Remove Barriers to Employment from Court Debt, which would eliminate driver's license suspensions due to failure to pay or failure to appear.

The Fair Chance team works to:

- ▶ *Identify unfair policies and practices used by public and private institutions to exclude people with criminal records from essential opportunities and resources;*
- ▶ *Facilitate high-quality dialogue among and between directly impacted people, decision makers, and other stakeholders regarding the devastating impact of these barriers to prosperity on individuals, families, and communities;*
- ▶ *Identify and raise awareness of best practices, programs, and policies; and*
- ▶ *Provide research and technical assistance to private and public decisionmakers throughout the consideration, adoption, and implementation of reforms to ensure relief reaches communities experiencing inequitable systems.*

- Partnered with The Athlete's Foot to present the symposium **"Unlocking Opportunities: The Business Case for Fair Chance Hiring and Second Chance Reform in NC."**
- **Researched and wrote two reports:** 1) *Waiving Criminal Court Fees Prevents Harms of Civil Debt*, coauthored with CRL; and 2) *Poverty Penalty: The Harsh Reality of Debt-based Driver's License Suspensions in North Carolina*.



and otherwise support fair housing efforts. Advocate with state agencies to adopt fair chance hiring policies, highlight fair housing practices and policies in community education and outreach events, and advise and provide support to community-based groups, including tenant organizing efforts, on advocacy for fair

chance housing admission policies.

MOVING FORWARD WE WILL:

Ensure people with criminal records can access resources and opportunities that promote successful reentry.

- Work with Second Chance Alliance members and other partners to **advocate for funding of reentry services and early release efforts**, and ensure the state continues to fund existing local reentry councils and supports the establishment of additional local reentry councils.
- **Provide support for a bill to reform structured sentencing laws**, shorten the maximum length of active sentences, eliminate mandatory minimums and habitual offenses, and reinstate the broad use of parole.
- **Continue expanding driver's license restoration work** and helping to draft and advance bills to discontinue the suspension of a driver's license for unpaid traffic court fees/fines. Execute education and advocacy campaign targeting district attorneys, relevant state agencies, impacted people, and North Carolina General Assembly ([ResolveTrafficDebtNC.Org](https://www.ResolveTrafficDebtNC.org)).
- **Increase and promote access to expunction and certificate of relief opportunities** in collaboration with local court officials and advocates. Help draft and advance bills to expand eligibility for criminal record expungement, ensure the efficacy of criminal record expunction, and automate expunctions for those who are eligible.
- **Promote prison and jail conditions and practices that protect the physical, emotional, and mental health of people in prison.** Advocate to eliminate solitary confinement, improve access to health care and mental health treatment, and increase prison programs supporting reentry prior to release.
- **Promote adoption of fair chance policies and practices**
- **Ensure recent occupational licensing law is being implemented** and allies and Second Chance Alliance partners understand the expanded rights of individuals with a criminal record.
- **Support coalition and working group efforts** to ensure bail is not keeping people with low incomes in jail if they do not pose an unreasonable risk.
- **Eliminate the NC Unauthorized Substances Tax (the "Drug Tax")** by helping draft and advance a bill eliminating the NC Drug Tax and terminating any outstanding tax liability.
- **Limit use of mug shots**, working with local sheriffs to end the practice, promoting Durham's practices in terms of access to mug shots, and providing support for legislation that limits the harm of mug shots in coalition with conservative groups.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER to *end poverty, build power, and share prosperity* across North Carolina!

SCAN HERE to support policies that promote a fair chance.



Or visit:

[ncjustice.org/fairchance](https://www.ncjustice.org/fairchance)



NORTH CAROLINA
JUSTICE CENTER

PO BOX 28068 | Raleigh, NC 27611-8068 | (919) 856-2570

www.ncjustice.org

EDUCATION
FAIR CHANCE
CRIMINAL JUSTICE

HEALTHCARE
HOUSING, CONSUMER
& ENERGY

IMMIGRANT &
REFUGEE RIGHTS
WORKERS' RIGHTS