

The People First Agenda

The Fair Chance Criminal Justice Project partners with impacted people, advocacy organizations, congregations, concerned community members, and decision-makers to defend rights, change local and state policies, and make the criminal legal system fairer—from arrest to reentry.



OUR 2026 GOALS

Restore the Opportunity to Drive

- ▶ Remove barriers to lawful driving that trap people in cycles of court debt, unemployment, and further justice involvement.
- ▶ Expand our driver's license restoration work, helping to advance bills to stop driver's license suspension for unpaid traffic court fees/fines.
- ▶ Center the experiences of impacted North Carolinians and highlight the economic and racial inequities created by debt-based suspensions.
- ▶ Promote our resource website, ResolveTrafficDebtNC.org, which provides bilingual information and tools to help people take steps toward license restoration.

Promote Recovery for People with Drug Convictions

- ▶ Lead public education efforts about the impacts of the NC Felony Drug SNAP ban, which denies food assistance to people with certain drug convictions and contributes to food insecurity, economic instability, and increased overdose risk during reentry and recovery.
- ▶ Support efforts to improve access to public benefits, including Medicaid and SNAP, for people with records, including those with drug convictions.

Advance Fair Chance Employment and Housing Opportunities

- ▶ Educate private businesses and advocate with state agencies to adopt fair chance hiring policies that limit the use of records in hiring decisions, reduce discrimination, and expand access to meaningful employment for people with records.
- ▶ Promote fair housing practices and policies through community education and outreach events, highlighting how criminal history exclusions contribute to housing instability and recidivism.

OUR 2025 HIGHLIGHTS

In 2025, we continued to utilize policy advocacy, public education, and storytelling to bring change. Our highlights include:

Policy Reform and Campaign Development

- Led campaign to expand SNAP benefits to people with felony drug convictions; collaborated with local partners to host community documentary screenings in North Carolina about the felony SNAP ban.
- Supporting the filing of bipartisan Felony SNAP Ban and Driver's license reform bills during the legislative session.
- Continued advocating for the repeal of the NC Drug Tax, mugshot regulation, and expanded access to expungement.
- Stopped a harmful expunction bill that would have blocked automatic expunction of dismissed and not guilty charges.
- Provided legal support to promote successful reentry by helping eliminate \$14,000 in criminal court debt and supported driver's license clinics in two state prisons.

Public Education

- Presented information sessions on fines and fees attended by new public defenders and more than 200 attorneys.
- Presented to Probation Officer managers about the consequences of unpaid probation fees and using waivers as a remedy.

CORE STRATEGIES AND APPROACHES

- Advocate for fair policies for people with criminal records to ensure they can access essential opportunities and resources.
- Build coalitions between directly impacted individuals, decision-makers, and stakeholders on the barriers to prosperity.
- Identify and raise awareness of best practices, programs, and policies.
- Provide research and technical assistance to decision-makers to ensure effective implementation of reforms and more equitable systems.

