



NETWORK
DELAWARE

DE CAMPAIGN TO

END

DEBTORS' PRISON

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UNPRECEDENTED CONSENSUS AMONG CRIMINAL JUSTICE COMMUNITY FOR NEXT STEPS IN FINES AND FEES REFORM

Community looks to the 2024 legislative cycle for next step reforms.

Wilmington, Delaware, January 29th, 2024 – [The Campaign to End Debtors' Prison](#) (CEDP) announces that the state of Delaware has published the [Final Report of the Criminal Legal System Imposed Debt Study Group](#). A broad set of stakeholders, including the Administrative Office of the Courts, the Attorney General's Office, and the Office of Defense Services, unanimously endorsed a large package of reforms to Delaware's justice system and its effect on poverty. These reforms include:

1. Waiving a person's court fines and fees if they are represented by a public defender or meet other criteria;
2. Directly funding certain government services rather than attaching them to court fees; and
3. Setting parameters for the forgiveness of uncollectable debt.

CEDP looks forward to working with elected officials and other stakeholders to pass legislation to make these recommended reforms a reality.

“We are thrilled that everyone—police, prosecutors, public defenders, and the public— was able to come together and declare support for more major steps forward in addressing the inequities in Delaware's justice system”, said Meryem Dede, co-coordinator of the CEDP. “It felt great to be part of a group where players put in significant time and serious effort to develop consensus on detailed recommendations covering very complex issues. We're thankful to everyone that was involved.”

CEDP's legislative priorities for 2024 will focus on promoting legislation that will hopefully implement the Study Group's recommendations.

“Most government services are funded through taxes— not through a complex and inefficient fee system. Imposing costs and fees on people impacted by the justice system drags many of us down, making it difficult to escape the system,” said Rebecka Ash (formerly Steiner), a member of the Study Group who's currently finishing a degree and working full-time. “When I joined the Study Group, I was literally still making monthly payments on court debt I accumulated from over six years ago. That's absurd.”

The Study Group was created by [HB 244 of the 151st General Assembly](#), which significantly reformed several aspects of court fines and fees. The study group was established to consider further reforms, and specifically to “make recommendations to promote access, fairness, and transparency in the imposition and collection of criminal justice imposed financial obligations.”

Members of the Study Group included representatives from the Senate, House, Governor’s Office, Administrative Office of the Courts, Office of Defense Services, Attorney General’s Office, the impacted community, State Police, Delaware Criminal Justice Information System (“DELJIS”), Controller General’s Office, Delaware Department of Technology and Information (“DTI”), Judicial Information Center (“JIC”), Office of State Court Collections Enforcement (“OSCCE”), Statistical Analysis Center, Department of Correction, Superior Court, Court of Common Pleas, Family Court, Justice of the Peace Courts, CEDP, and other community groups.

All of the materials can be found on the General Assembly’s [webpage for the Study Group](#).

[About the Campaign to End Debtors’ Prison](#)

The Campaign to End Debtors’ Prison is a coalition of Delaware community members working through Network Delaware to push for reform of the court fines and fees system, and seeking to eliminate poverty as an element of criminal punishment.