



NETWORK  
DELAWARE

DE CAMPAIGN TO

END

DEBTORS' PRISON

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

April 3, 2023

**Contact:**

Meryem Dede

meryem.y.dede@gmail.com

## **DELAWARE IMPLEMENTS FINES AND FEES REFORM LAW: THOUSANDS RECEIVE “GREENLIGHT” TO REINSTATE THEIR DRIVERS LICENSES**

*News Provided by the Delaware Campaign to End Debtors' Prison*

**Wilmington, Delaware, April 3, 2023** – [The Campaign to End Debtors' Prison](#) announces that the state of Delaware is implementing reforms to the state's “fines and fees” system today, April 3, 2023. Prompted by a new law, these measures provide relief to thousands impacted by the criminal justice system. Chief amongst its reforms, the new law ends drivers license suspensions for overdue criminal justice system fines and fees, a system that illogically punished people for not having money by keeping them from being able to drive to work or otherwise function in an economy dependent on personal motor vehicle transportation. Anyone whose license was previously suspended because of a failure to pay capias, or bench warrant, from a Delaware court will be eligible to have their license reinstated. In addition, such people reinstating their licenses will not be required to pay a fee (previously \$50) for their license reinstatement.

Known as [HB 244, the legislation was passed by the General Assembly last year](#) and signed into law by Governor Carney. The law makes a number of additional reforms effective today. The new law ends the imposition of fines and fees on children going through adjudications of delinquency, eliminates fees charged to defendants of all ages who use a public defender, eliminates fees for probation and parole supervision, and eliminates a number of other justice system fees. The new law takes a first step into eliminating the criminalization of poverty and aims to make it easier for people to reenter society and get a “second chance” after involvement in the criminal justice system.

The new law also keeps an eye turned to areas where future reforms are needed. It requires Delaware's courts to publicly report on the amounts collected for fines and fees and creates a new study group for considering further reforms, [one that has already started working \(schedule\)](#). “Over 5 years later, I work for the state of Delaware, I am doing everything right, and I still have the threat of returning to prison because I cannot afford to pay the fines.” said Rebecka Steiner, who in addition to working in adult education and studying in school, herself, serves on the new law's study group.

“This past October, Delaware took a big first step forward in helping families across our state,” said Meryem Dede, co-coordinator of the CEDP and Debt Free Justice Attorney at Juvenile Law Center. “No person, youth or adult, should face different justice system consequences based on

their financial status. HB 244 makes major strides in this direction.” More remains to be done to address inequities in Delaware’s justice system, Dede noted. With the implementation of HB 244 and the new Debt Study Group, “we look forward to seeing Delaware finish what it started.”

Delaware’s court system, itself, recognizes the need for reforms when it comes to the imposition of costs on people impacted by the criminal justice system. “As much as possible, we ought to make the judiciary a general fund judiciary instead of essentially funding judicial operations off the backs of poor people, frankly,” [said Delaware Supreme Court Chief Justice Collins Seitz](#) at this year’s judiciary Joint Finance Committee Hearing.

For assistance with reinstating a Delaware drivers license, please contact Delaware DMV Driver Improvement at 302-744-2508.

For financial assistance with fines and fees, please contact [Friendship House](#): (302) 482-2271

To make a donation to people currently in need of assistance with court-issued fines and fees, please visit [here](#).

#### [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.