

Funding Stabilization / Fee Elimination Package

SB 282, SB 283, SB 284 & HB 391

Right now, every crime or minor offense (speeding tickets get these too!) in Delaware comes with up to hundreds of dollars in “fees”, which are not about accountability, but surcharges added to the punishment. Most of these fees were added over the last 20 years by the General Assembly and go to fund specific government services.

Our vital government services currently depend on people committing crimes. This is a problem because as crime goes down, government services suffer. It’s also a problem because Delaware is imposing these fees on those generally least able to afford them (85% of defendants in Delaware are represented by court-appointed counsel). Since 2021, our courts have written off over \$40 million in court fees, deeming them “uncollectable.”

Fees are unjust and cruel. They are an inconvenience for some, but for others they turn a small mistake into a lifetime of debt and poverty. **SB 282, SB 283, SB 284, and HB 391** take steps to begin to end this cruel and inefficient system. A misdemeanor sentence of a \$100 fine and low level probation could currently come with almost \$200 in General Assembly-set fees. These bills will more than half those costs:

- Set by the General Assembly:
 - + ~~\$1 Videophone Fund~~ + ~~\$10 Court Security Fee~~
 - + ~~\$1 DELJIS Fund~~ + ~~\$20 Victims Rights Fund~~
 - + \$15 Fund to Combat Violent Crimes + ~~\$100 Senior Trust Fund~~
 - + \$10 Volunteer Ambulance Company Fund + ~~\$15 SARTEP Fee~~
 - + \$10 Victim’s Compensation Fund + ~~\$50 Interstate Transfer Fee~~

SB 282

SB 283

HB 391

*SB 284 removes old debt from fees previously eliminated by HB244 (151st GA).

It’s time we stabilize the funding for these vital services. For example, SB 283 will eliminate the DELJIS Fund Fee, and instead provide DELJIS money directly from the General Fund. DELJIS is supposed to get \$260k/year from the DELJIS Fund Fee, but last year received not even half that. SB 283 will make sure DELJIS has stable funding.

These reforms are widely supported! Delaware’s Court-Imposed Debt Study Group unanimously approved the recommendations enshrined in these 4 bills in December of last year. The Study Group included:

- The Attorney General’s Office
- The Administrative Office of the Courts
- The Office of Defense Services
- The Governor’s Office
- The Secretary of the Department of Safety and Homeland Security
- And community groups

For more information, please go to finesandfeesde.org, or contact Meryem Dede, campaign co-coordinator, at mdede@tideshiftjustice.com

