



Advancing Racial Equity Through Public Policy

June 19, 2023

We are writing to express our support for House Bills 4634 – 4637 regarding the elimination of juvenile fees. Many elements of these bills align with our mission and, more specifically, our focus on decriminalizing poverty.

Our [CEO Action for Racial Equity \(CEOARE\) Fellowship](#) unites the talent and resources of [more than 100 signatory organizations](#) to advance racial equity through public policy, many of whom have a significant presence in Michigan. We are committed to working with lawmakers from both sides of the aisle to help bring equity, transparency, and accountability to our justice system.

In Michigan, youth and their families are repeatedly charged with fees throughout the juvenile court process, including fees for cost of care, court-appointed attorneys, DNA assessments, or community service, etc. These costs can quickly add up, and youth may face the difficult choice of either taking a job to pay their court bills now or continuing their education. Unpaid fees can also follow youth into adulthood, harming their credit and eligibility for student loans, rental leases, or car loans.¹

Michigan businesses are looking to foster and leverage diversity to drive innovation and economic success. However, Black youths in Michigan are arrested at a disproportionately higher rate compared to youths of any other race,² making it harder for businesses to hire the multicultural and skilled workforce they want and need.

House Bills 4634 – 4637 provide Michigan with the opportunity to change policies that have created a cycle of debt and stress for children and their families. Our justice system policies should give our children the best chance of success in life, including the chance to participate in the workforce and contribute to economic growth and development in Michigan.

CEOARE urges you to advance House Bills 4634 – 4637, which will eliminate juvenile justice fees in Michigan and will enact policies that bring equity, transparency, and accountability to our justice system.

Sincerely,

CEO Action for Racial Equity

¹ Atasi Uppal, *The High Cost of "Justice": A Snapshot of Juvenile Court Fines and Fees in Michigan* (National Center for Youth Law, August 2020), 9, <https://youthlaw.org/sites/default/files/attachments/2022-02/2020.08.13-MI-Fines-Fees-1.pdf>.

² Michigan Committee on Juvenile Justice, Michigan Racial and Ethnic Disparities Data, Fiscal Year 2020, Michigan 2020 Matrix, Percentage of Minorities at Stages of the Juvenile Justice System, All Reporting Counties 2020 (Tab: Stacked 100%), <https://michigancommitteeonjuvenilejustice.com/michigan-data/michigan-racial-and-ethnic-disparities-data/>.