

Stand for Children

Children's Rights

<http://stand.org/national/blog/court-fees-trap-youth-justice-system>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

Did you know that kids who are committed to Oregon's Youth Justice System are charged administrative fees that can follow them well into adult life? I was one of those kids, and the trauma of the financial burden it placed on my family follows me to this day.

My name is Siobhan, and I am a Black woman who grew up in Oregon. When I was 15 years old, I made the mistake of shoplifting a pair of pants for a Father's Day gift and got caught by the store before I made it out the door. The staff pulled my friend and I into a backroom and told us they were going to call the police. We both pleaded with them to call our parents instead, but minutes later the police arrived. I was handcuffed. My white friend had also shoplifted. They let her go without searching her and she walked out with her stolen item and without having to enter Oregon's justice system.

The expenses started to add up immediately. My mom had to take off work for the court date which meant less money in the paycheck. Then, the court assigned me a fine in addition to the court fees. **Any unexpected expense was devastating to us, and it all fell on my mom, who at the time was doing all she could to keep a roof over my head, food on the table and the lights on.**

It was difficult. We did not have the payments every month, so late fees and non-payment fees were piled on. When you barely have enough for food you hardly think about paying the court. My mom did the best she could to pay for my mistake. Finally, when I was in college, she paid the last payment. We celebrated.

There is something wrong with a system that punishes people for being poor. That is exactly what happened to me and my mom. We did not have money for a good lawyer. We did not have the time to go into court for an appeal.

We don't need a system that pushes kids and families further out, but one that helps us do well. That's why I am asking lawmakers to support Senate Bill 817 which will remove these unjust administrative fees for kids and ensure the next generation of youth will not have a story like mine. If you live in Oregon, [will you join me and send an email to lawmakers now in support of SB817?](#)

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