

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/research/bail-fines-and-fees>

Policy Issue Resources

The New Orleans criminal justice system, like many other local systems across the country, operates significantly on funding generated from the people cycling through it from bail and associated fees before trial, to fines and fees levied after conviction. These practices come with hidden costs to defendants the majority of whom are poor and black and taxpayers alike. Such user fees are often set without consideration of the defendant's financial means, and failure to pay can keep someone behind bars or land them back in jail. This perpetuates an overreliance on local incarceration that exacts significant unnecessary costs on individuals, communities, and taxpayers. This explainer video from the [Past Due project](#) sheds light on fines, fees, and financial bail in New Orleans.

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A First Look

New York's recent bail reform law, which was passed in April 2019 and amended on July 2, 2020, was expected to reduce the footprint of jail incarceration by limiting the use of money bail. The new law mandated pretrial release for the vast majority of nonviolent charges and required that judges consider a person's ability to pay bail. A comprehensive ...

A correctional officer watches as people sit for lunch at the Moriah Shock Incarceration Correctional Facility in Mineville, New York. Photo by AP Photo/Mike Groll. Last month, New York closed six upstate prisons, each of which had been operating well under capacity. Collectively, the now-closed facilities filled just 43.7 percent of their available ...

When COVID-19 struck, many jails and prisons were poorly equipped to provide even basic medical care. Yet, the onset of the pandemic found the country's mass incarceration system shamefully well-equipped with punitive solitary confinement cells. As it became clear that incarcerated people were in grave danger, public health experts recommended dec ...

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