

Dante Bristow - testimony for Informational Hearing

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My name is Dante Bristow. I grew up in the system young. If you go through courts, anything like that they are charging you for every step of the way court fines bracelet fines. All those fines. Probation fines, UA fines. The poorer, which is the blacker communities, we tend to not have money, we are considered poor. If we don't pay these fines fees, we get stuck in a cycle and we're going to stay in that cycle, because it's just going to rack up on us. We can't get out, we have no money to get out of it. We're going to be in that cycle. Jail, probation fines.

They will put you in jail if you don't pay these fines and fees. You get in the system because of my fines and fees. I couldn't pay these fines and fees off, I remember one time I was young I had a bracelet on and I couldn't pay for it. I ended up going to jail because we couldn't pay for this bracelet. I'm 25 years old and till to this day I have a hard time passing a background check because of things I did when I was a juvenile, under 16 years old. I feel like I don't have a normal life because I'm constantly having to pay fines and fees and having to worry about this problem of being incarcerated because of these fines and fees. It's hard especially when you have kids, or you have to pay bills, fines and fees can really be something that hurts.

It affects your ability to get jobs, because if you're on fines and fees you can't get anything expunged from your criminal history until you pay off these fines and fees. I just got off of a bracelet for something I did as a juvenile. I had actually moved away and I was living in Toledo, OH. They came and got me there and flew me back to Kansas on a plane. They wanted me to get a job, live my life, take care of my family, pay my taxes, I was finally doing that, I finally got out of the system, I felt like I finally broke it. I wasn't on probation, just living my life with my family down there, but they came and brought me back to Kansas for things I did when I was a juvenile. You don't want to be going through the same thing 5 to 10 years later, that's your life. It feels like being on a leash. I'm 25 years old now, and I haven't been in trouble since I was a juvenile. No youth should be punished for their fines and fees. I was a youth that's been punished, and I don't want to keep seeing youth punished for these fines and fees.