



DOUGLAS COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

Seventh Judicial District
Judicial & Law Enforcement Center
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<https://www.douglascountyks.org/depts/district-attorney>

Suzanne Valdez
District Attorney

Joshua D. Seiden
Deputy District Attorney

March 11, 2024

Testimony regarding Juvenile Fines and Fees

Dear Sirs/Madams:

My name is Suzanne Valdez, and I am the Douglas County District Attorney, which comprises the Seventh Judicial District. I write in full support of the passage of Senate Bill 416 that proposes to eliminate juvenile offender fines and fees (other than restitution).

As I understand Senate Bill 416, if passed by the Kansas Legislature, juvenile offenders, their parents, guardians, and/or custodians will NOT be assessed fines or fees for the following: house arrest, electronic monitoring or remote alcoholic monitoring programing fees, registration fees, attorney fees, custodial or detention fees, immediate intervention program (IIP) fees, treatment fees, community-based program fees, evaluation fees (of any kind), or any court fees associated with court-based sanctions. Thus, the essence of the bill will prohibit the court, or prosecutors, in attempting to resolve a juvenile offender case, to assess any court costs or fees to the juvenile or to his or her parent, guardian, or custodian. Importantly, however, per the language of the bill, the juvenile and/or his or her parent, guardian or custodian will remain responsible for any restitution that is owed to a victim or survivor.

My basis for my position on this bill is that financial burdens placed on a juvenile offender is burdensome. After all, the juvenile is a minor and is under the legal responsibility of an adult, albeit a parent(s), guardian or other adult custodian. The juvenile is likely school-aged. The juvenile is obligated to attend school daily and perhaps, when encouraged to do so, to participate in after school activities such as clubs, sports, and other extracurricular activities. After school obligations take hours of time and dedication, but they often prove to help the juvenile to become better engaged in school, as well as well-rounded and responsible individuals.

Some juvenile offenders are employed after school and on the weekends, and often times this employment is in lieu of after school activities or in addition to them. Minors who are employed often work to earn spending money or to assist their families with necessities, such as rent, gas, and/or groceries. A juvenile offender who is strapped with court fines and fees would essentially have the following options: (1) adults responsible for the juvenile would have to pay fines and fees; or (2) the juvenile offender would be forced to work a part-time job to pay these obligations.



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I feel strongly that our juvenile offender code, as a rehabilitative system, should abolish court fines and fees for the reasons I have just discussed. Instead, alternatives such as community service and restorative justice should be implemented to assure that a juvenile is properly held accountable for their criminal transgressions.

Sincerely,

/s/Suzanne Valdez

Suzanne Valdez
Douglas County District Attorney