

April 5, 2021

The Honorable Jamie Becker-Finn  
Chair, Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee  
559 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155



The Honorable Cedrick Frazier  
Vice-Chair, Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform Finance and Policy Committee  
439 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

Dear Chair Becker-Finn, Representative Frazier, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the 135 organizations of the Minnesota Asset Building Coalition, thank you for including the provisions from the Fines and Fees bill (House File 306) in the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Omnibus Budget Bill. These provisions (Article 3, Section 4-7) give the court discretion to reduce, waive, or offer community service in lieu of the \$75 state surcharge in cases of financial hardship and require the court to consider ability to pay before imposing a sentence that includes fines, fees, or surcharges.

Criminal and traffic fines and fees impose a heavy financial burden on low-income individuals, for whom the collateral consequences of non-payment often lead to escalating debt and increased interaction with the criminal justice system. Both national and state studies demonstrate that BIPOC communities are disproportionately affected by the fines and fees trap. Too often, judges impose fines and fees without consideration of a person's ability to pay, and in some cases, state law denies judges the discretion to right-size fines and fees to a person's ability to pay. In either situation, unaffordable fines and fees can have devastating consequences, forcing people to choose between meeting their basic needs or paying court debt to avoid the collateral consequences of defaulting. Individuals struggling under the burden of court debt often turn to their families for assistance, so fines and fees imposed without consideration of ability to pay can financially destabilize entire families.

We are extremely grateful to the members of the Judiciary Finance and Civil Law Committee for supporting the Fines and Fees bill, and especially to Representative Frazier for his leadership on the bill and Chair Becker-Finn for including these provisions in the Committee omnibus budget bill. Thank you for all your hard work on behalf of Minnesota communities.

Sincerely,

Anna Odegaard  
Director  
Minnesota Asset Building Coalition  
aodegaard@mnlisap.org



## Member List

AARP Minnesota  
AEOA Head Start  
African American Leadership Forum  
African Community Senior Services  
African Development Center  
African Economic Development Solutions  
African Immigrant Services  
African Women's Alliance  
All Parks Alliance for Change  
Anoka County Community Action Program  
Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency  
Asian Economic Development Association  
Asian Media Access  
Bi-County Community Action Programs  
Black Women's Wealth Alliance  
Build Wealth MN  
CAPI USA  
Car Care Program  
Cars for Neighbors  
Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis  
Catalyst Group  
Children's Defense Fund Minnesota  
CHUM  
Churches United for the Homeless  
Citizens League  
City of Lakes Community Land Trust  
CLUES  
Coalition of Somali American Leaders  
CommonBond Communities  
Community Action Center of Northfield  
Community Action Duluth  
Community Action Partnership of Hennepin County  
Community Action Partnership of Ramsey &  
Washington Counties  
Community Action Partnership of Scott Carver &  
Dakota Counties  
Community Grassroots Solutions  
Community Table Association of Cooperatives  
Cornerstone  
Cultural Diversity Resources  
Dayton's Bluff Community Council  
EMERGE Community Development  
Exodus Lending  
Family Assets for Independence in Minnesota  
Family Means  
Financial Empowerment Collaborative  
Fond Du Lac Tribal and Community College  
Goodwill-Easter Seals Minnesota  
Growth & Justice  
Head Start, Three Rivers Community Action  
Hmong American Farmers Association  
Hmong American Partnership  
HOME In-stead M.O.M.S. Program  
HOME Line  
Hope Community  
Immigrant Development Center  
Immigrant Law Center of Minnesota  
Institute for a Sustainable Future  
Inter-County Community Council  
ISIAAH  
Isuroon  
Jewish Community Action  
Joint Religious Legislative Coalition  
Jordan Area Community Council  
Junior Achievement of the Upper Midwest  
Juxtaposition Arts  
KOOTASCA Community Action  
Lakes & Pines Community Action Council  
Lakes & Prairies Community Action Partnership  
Land Stewardship Project  
Lao Assistance Center of Minnesota  
Latino Economic Development Center  
Legal Services Advocacy Project  
LISC Twin Cities

Lutheran Social Service of Minnesota  
Mahube-Otwa Community Action Partnership  
Main Street Alliance  
Main Street Project  
Metropolitan Consortium of Community  
Developers  
Midwest Minnesota CDC  
MIGIZI  
Minneapolis Urban League  
Minnesota Budget Project  
Minnesota Coalition for the Homeless  
Minnesota Community Action Partnership  
Minnesota Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities  
Minnesota Head Start Association  
Minnesota Housing Partnership  
Minnesota Social Service Association  
Minnesota Valley Action Council  
Mni Sota Fund  
Native American Community Development Institute  
Neighborhood Development Alliance  
Nexus Community Partners  
Northside Economic Opportunity Network  
Northside Residents Redevelopment Council  
Northwest Community Action  
Northwest Head Start  
Northwest Indian CDC  
Nucleus Clinic  
Pillsbury United Communities  
Prepare + Prosper  
PRG, Inc.  
PRISM  
Project for Pride in Living  
Reach-Up Head Start

Regional Center for Entrepreneurial Facilitation  
Rice County Habitat for Humanity  
Semcac  
Shared Capitol Cooperative  
Somali Community Resettlement Services  
Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership  
Southwestern Minnesota Opportunity Council  
St. Cloud NAACP  
TakeAction Minnesota  
The Family Partnership  
The Lift Garage  
The Link  
The Welcome Center  
Three Rivers Community Action  
Tri-CAP  
Tri-County Community Action Partnership  
Tri-Valley Opportunity Council  
Twin Cities Habitat for Humanity  
United Community Action Partnership  
United Way of Douglas & Pope Counties  
United Way of Freeborn County  
United Way of West Central Minnesota  
Urban Homeworks  
Valley Outreach  
Violence Free Minnesota  
Voices for Racial Justice  
West Central Minnesota Communities Action  
White Earth Investment Initiative  
Wilder Foundation  
WomenVenture  
Wright County Community Action  
Youthprise