

THE FINANCIAL JUSTICE PROJECT

S A N F R A N C I S C O

**Presentation to
Policy Insights 2018**



The Financial Justice Project

A first-in-the-nation
countywide effort to alleviate
the inequitable burden of
financial penalties on struggling
San Franciscans.



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SAN FRANCISCO

Top Lessons



Fines and fees are spreading when people can least afford them.



Steep fines and fees that are beyond people's ability to pay can dig people into financial holes



Steep fines and fees can be “high pain” and “low gain” and a lose-lose for citizens and government



Solutions exist that work for both government and citizens.

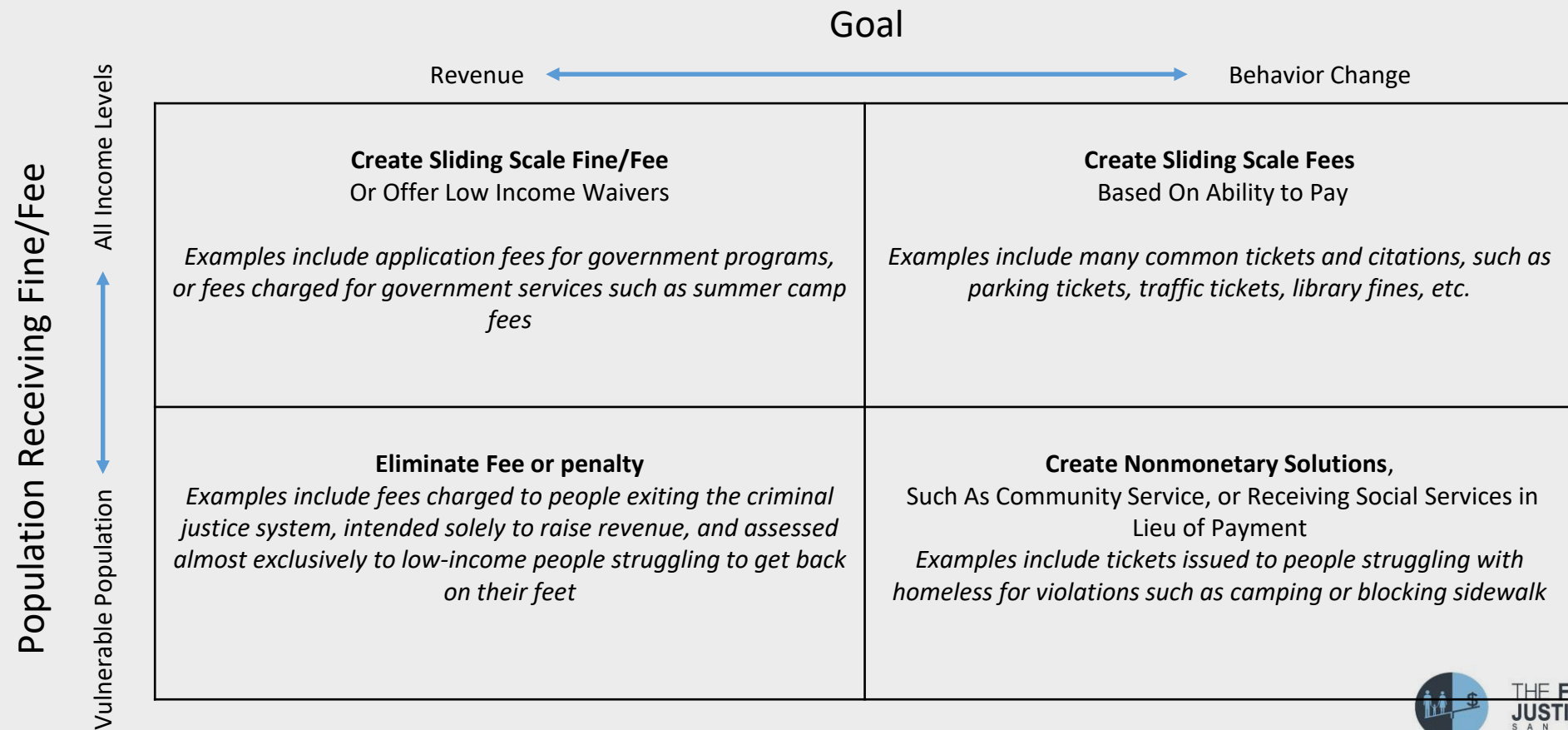
The consequence should fit the offense, and not hit the poor or people of color harder.

Policy Areas for Reform



Solutions

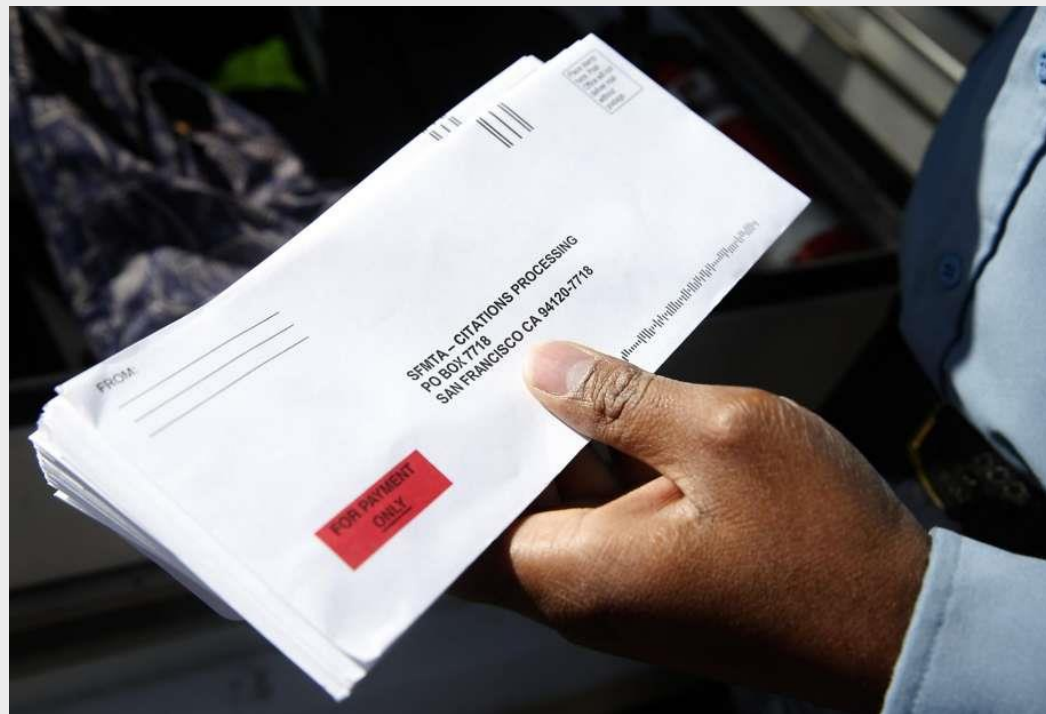
- 1.) What is the goal of the fine or fee?
- 2) Who receives these fines and fees?



San Francisco Advances First in the Nation Legislation to Eliminate Criminal Justice Admin. Fees



SF MTA cuts fees for low-income people to pay off tickets



Nonmonetary Solutions

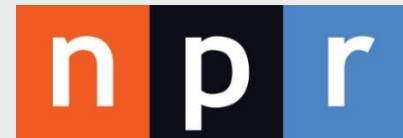
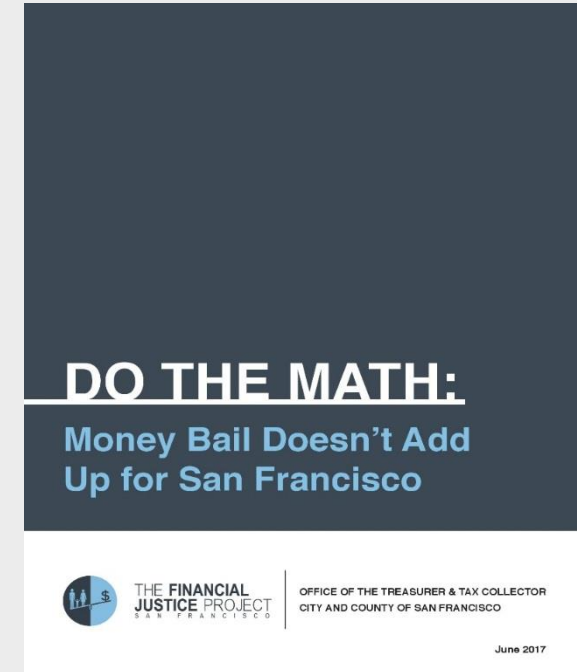
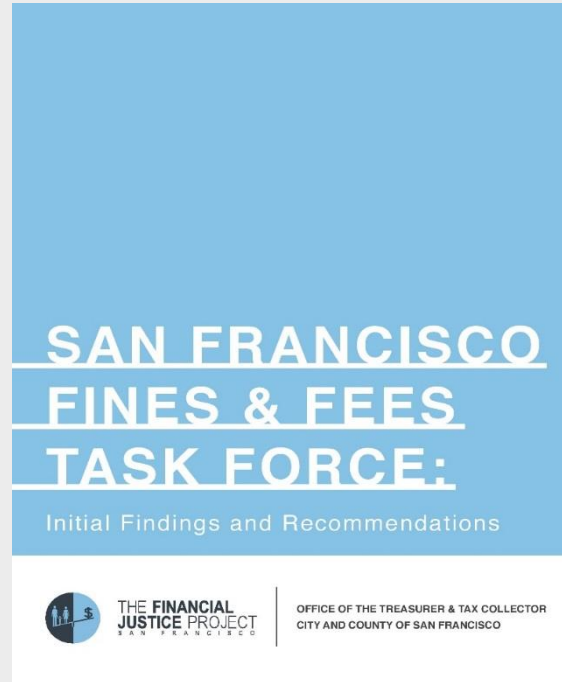
Community Service, or Receiving Social Services in Lieu of Payment



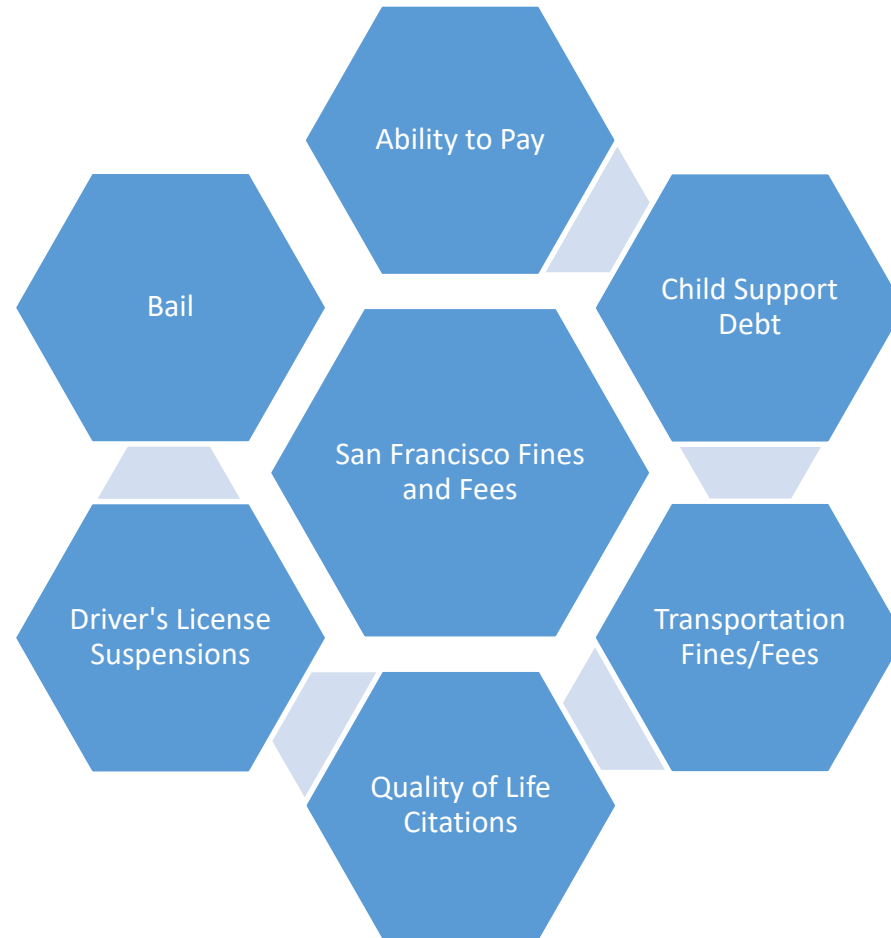
Reports & Media Coverage

<http://sftreasurer.org/financialjustice>

 @FairFinesFees



AREAS OF REFORM



RECOMMENDATIONS

ABILITY TO PAY



GOAL:

When possible and appropriate, base fine and fee amounts on an individual's ability to pay, to ensure consequences do not place an inequitable burden on low income San Franciscans.

DRIVER'S LICENSE SUSPENSIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL:

Remove employment barriers for low-income San Franciscans by ending the practice of suspending San Franciscans' licenses when they are unable to pay traffic citations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

QUALITY OF LIFE CITATIONS



GOAL:

Ensure that “Quality of Life” citations do not punish people for being poor or create barriers to employment and housing for people struggling with homelessness.

TRANSPORTATION FINES AND FEES



RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL:

To ensure consequences for transportation violations hold people accountable but do not pose an inequitable burden for low income San Franciscans.

BAIL



RECOMMENDATIONS

GOAL:

Reform our local system of bail to ensure decisions to keep someone in jail are based on the risk they pose to the community, not the amount of money in their bank account. All local bail reform efforts must enhance public safety, increase accountability, and enhance justice, and equity.

RECOMMENDATIONS

CHILD SUPPORT DEBT



GOAL:

Relieve the inequitable financial burden of child support debt owed to the government by low income parents when they cannot afford to pay.



THE SACRAMENTO BEE



It's self-defeating to bill parents for their children's jail time

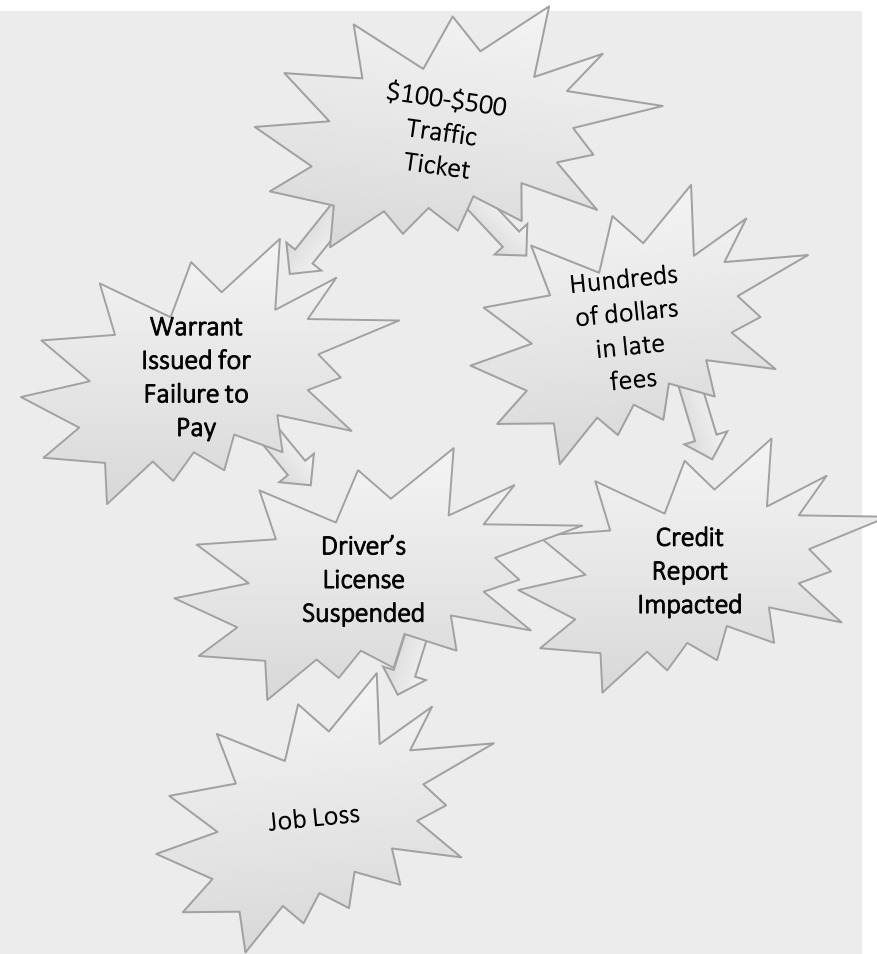
BY ANNE STUHLBREHER



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Meet “Andrew”

- 22-year-old single father, making regular payments on a couple of traffic tickets.
- Lost his job after his son was diagnosed with leukemia
- Fines were handed off to a collections agency, with an extra \$300 “civil assessment” tacked on for “failure to pay”
- The court refused to hear his case unless he paid the full fine amount, and his license was suspended



Solution: Ability To Pay and Proportional Consequences

	Proportional Consequence			
Population	Get help. Fine resolved if person receives X hours of help (counseling, addiction services, health services, etc.)	Perform community service	Fine payment based on ability to pay. Payment plan offered.	Regular fine
Youth under 18				
People struggling with homelessness				
Very low-income				
Working Poor				
Middle-income				
Upper-income				