



September 3, 2020

VIA Email to the Office of the Governor

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, The State of California
California State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Eliminating Criminal Fees Through the Budget AB 1869 – REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Newsom:

The League of Women Voters writes to request your signature on trailer bill AB 1869, to eliminate criminal fees through the California budget. The budget action will end the assessment and collection of certain fees, including various probation-related fees and public defender fees, imposed against people in the criminal legal system.

Because of the over-policing of communities of color, and racial inequities in the criminal legal system, California's Black and Brown communities are disproportionately impacted by the imposition of fees – making their repeal a matter of racial justice. The fees limit access to employment, housing, education, and public benefits, thereby creating barriers to successful reentry and sustaining a crippling cycle of poverty. Fee debt can prevent families from spending their already limited resources on basic needs for food, shelter, and access to healthcare.

Research shows that the fees are difficult and expensive to collect. For instance, in one year, Alameda County Central Collections spent approximately \$1.6 million toward collection of adult fines, fees and restitution, resulting in a net loss of \$1.3 million. Furthermore, the fees have been correlated with a heightened risk of recidivism due to the cascade of financial problems that they cause. By eliminating the need for wasteful collections expenses and decreasing recidivism, this legislation will reduce government spending.

Criminal justice fees and other charges drive people into debt and push families deeper into poverty. While always onerous, the fees are particularly burdensome in the context of the current pandemic. **The League strongly supports AB 1869 as a budget priority and a first step towards allowing system-involved people to devote their limited resources to critical needs.** Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carol Moon Goldberg".

Carol Moon Goldberg
President