

**DATE: February 2, 2021**

**TO: Chair Prozanski and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Ballot Measure  
110 Implementation**

**FROM: Siobhan Cancél, Stand for Children Oregon volunteer leader, Senate District 4 resident**

**RE: Senate Bill 422**

My name is Siobhan Cancél and I am a leader of the Lane County Stand for Children Chapter. I'm asking you to support Senate Bill 422. We must abolish the excessive fees that are put upon youth who make a mistake. I was one of those kids, and the trauma of the financial burden it placed on my family follows me to this day.

I am a Black woman who grew up in Eugene, Oregon. When I was 15 years old, I made the mistake of shoplifting a pair of pants for a Father's Day gift and got caught by the store before I made it out the door. The staff pulled my friend and I into a backroom and told us they were going to call the police. We both pleaded with them to call our parents instead, but minutes later the police arrived. I was handcuffed. My white friend had also shoplifted. They let her go without searching her and she walked out with her stolen item and without having to enter Oregon's justice system.

Fifteen and afraid, I sat handcuffed as the police told me they were going to call my mom and if they could not get in touch with her, I would be taken into custody. This scared me even more because my mom worked nights (11pm – 7am) and was probably sleeping before her shift.

They got ahold of her. She arrived and offered to pay for the pants, but the police said no and gave her the details for my court case. I could tell she was livid but as we left, she put her arm around me and said, "this is going to be okay." I remember crying as we walked to the car; I was so sad that I had woken her up and that I failed as a daughter.

The expenses started to add up immediately. My mom had to take off work for the court date which meant less money in the paycheck. Then, the court assigned me a fine in addition to the court fees. Any unexpected expense was devastating to us, and it all fell on my mom, who at the time was doing all she could to keep a roof over my head, food on the table and the lights on. Needless to say, she signed up for the payment plan.

It was difficult. We did not have the payments every month, so late fees and non-payment fees were piled on. When you barely have enough for food you hardly think about paying the court. My mom did the best she could to pay for my mistake. Finally, when I was in college, she paid the last payment. We celebrated.

There is something wrong with a system that punishes people for being poor. That is exactly what happened to me and my mom. We did not have money for a good lawyer. We did not have the time to go into court for an appeal. We certainly did not know of any programs that could help us with the insurmountable debt that would be accumulated. And perhaps the most important question is: **would this have happened if I were white?** Would the store have gone a

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little easier on me and let me off with a warning? Would they have let my mom pay for the pants? Would the officers still have put me in handcuffs? Those questions followed me and my family just as the fees did.

These fees place not just a monetary burden but an emotional and mental burden as well. Imagine having to choose between electric and food each month then imagine having another bill piled on top that. You constantly worry and are never sure if you will make it. You start to think of yourself as a “bad kid.” Please do all you can to consider the family and whether these administrative fees are worth the pain they put families through. We don’t need a system that pushes kids and families further out, but one that helps us do well.

**I urge you to support Senate Bill 422** which will ensure the next generation of youth will not have a story like mine.

Thank you,

Siobhan Cancél