

Recent News

County supes approve moratorium on juvenile detention fees charged to families



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The Contra Costa County Board of Supervisors on Tuesday unanimously voted to impose a moratorium on all fees charged to parents and guardians of children in the juvenile justice system.

The decision, which freezes all assessments and collections for fees related to a child's incarceration or placement in an electronic monitoring program, will "offer immediate relief to thousands of families with outstanding debt," according to Rebecca Brown, founder and director of Reentry Solutions Group.

The moratorium goes into effect Nov. 1. The issue will next head to county departments for additional study. The Board of Supervisors has requested a report on the moratorium's impact no later than May 31 next year.

Advocates for the moratorium recommend doing away with the fees for good, saying they provide little financial gain for the county but increase the barriers for low-income families struggling to make ends meet.

Before the moratorium, the county charged \$30 nightly to stay in juvenile hall and \$17 daily for electronic ankle monitoring, among other fees.

Brown cites research by the Policy Advocacy Clinic stating the county generated about \$242,827 last fiscal year, which she notes is a small fraction of the Probation Department's \$74 million budget.

But fees are not a small fraction for low-income families, advocates said.

"In many cases, the fees have added up to thousands of dollars per family," according to the Reentry Solutions Group.

Supervisor John Gioia pushed for the moratorium following research and advocacy by Reentry Solutions Group, which collaborated with U.C. Berkeley School of Law Policy Advocacy Clinic, Jeff Landau of the Racial Justice Coalition, and county departments including probation and administration.

"Our goal should be to help families and support youth as they transition out of the juvenile justice system to lead successful and productive lives," Gioia said.

The local push to do away fees is operating in conjunction with a similar statewide effort.