

CONTACT:

CHELSEA LEWIS (JUVENILE LAW CENTER)

OFFICE: 215-625-0551 x 126 EMAIL: press@jlc.org

Juvenile Law Center Files Brief Before U.S. Supreme Court to Ensure Protections for Children Facing Fines and Fees

National children's rights public interest law firm underscores how excessive fines and fees put children and families nationwide at risk

Philadelphia, PA (September 14, 2018): Juvenile Law Center submitted an [amicus brief](#) on Wednesday in the United States Supreme Court on behalf of 41 youth advocacy organizations in the case of [Tyson Timbs v. State of Indiana](#). The brief supports Mr. Timbs' position that the U.S. Constitution's protection against excessive fines applies to state and local governments.

Juvenile Law Center's brief underscores that children across the country will be at risk of serious harm and disproportionate penalties unless the Court clarifies that the Eighth Amendment prohibition on excessive fines protects them from state and local actions.

Approximately one million youth appear in state and local juvenile courts each year, and almost every state imposes exorbitant fines and fees on youth or their families. [Research shows](#) that fines and fees push youth deeper into the justice system, increase racial and economic disparities, and increase the likelihood of recidivism.

According to Juvenile Law Center Associate Director, Jessica Feierman, the *Timbs* case will have serious implications for young people. "For most teenagers, fines create an impossible financial obligation. For their families, many of whom are already struggling to get by, juvenile justice fines also create serious economic and emotional stress, undermining the rehabilitative purpose of the juvenile justice system."

Juvenile justice fines and fees can have devastating consequences for youth. Youth who cannot pay may face prolonged detention or even incarceration. They may also be denied treatment or access to diversion programs that can help them avoid formal processing in the juvenile justice system. Many families struggle financially to keep up with payments, sometimes choosing between basic necessities—like groceries or school uniforms—and paying juvenile justice costs.

Juvenile justice fines also heighten existing disparities in the juvenile justice system. They allow wealthier youth to avoid significant justice system involvement while youth in poverty are pushed deeper into the system. They also exacerbate racial disparities, imposing greater costs on youth and families of color than on their white counterparts.

Juvenile Law Center's brief in support of Timbs is part of its larger effort to end the unfair practice of imposing fines and fees in the juvenile justice system.

Juvenile Law Center advocates for rights, dignity, equity and opportunity for youth in the foster care and justice systems.

Founded in 1975, Juvenile Law Center is the first non-profit, public interest law firm for children in the country. We fight for youth through litigation, appellate advocacy and submission of amicus (friend-of-the-court) briefs, policy reform, public education, training, consulting, and strategic communications. Widely published and internationally recognized as leaders in the field, Juvenile Law Center has substantially shaped the development of law and policy on behalf of youth. We strive to ensure that laws, policies, and practices affecting youth advance racial and economic equity and are rooted in research, consistent with children's unique developmental characteristics, and reflective of international human rights values. For more information about Juvenile Law Center's work, visit www.JLC.org.

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