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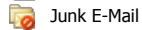
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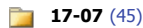
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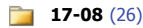
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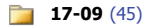

16-12 Grants Committee



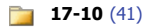
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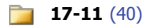
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## For Immediate Release - Senator Joyce Waddell's Court Fees

Jyrita Moore (Sen. Joyce Waddell) [Waddelljla@ncleg.net]

Sent: Monday, November 27, 2017 2:54 PM



From the Office of Sen. Joyce Waddell, NC Senate  
Mecklenburg County



### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Monday, November 27, 2017

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### Court Fees

**Charlotte, NC** – The General Assembly’s Republican majority included a provision in the latest state budget that would make it cumbersome for judges to waive court fees and fines. Section 18B.6.(a) of Senate Bill 257, which passed on June 28, states, “No court may waive or remit all or part of any court fines or costs without providing notice and opportunity to be heard by all government entities directly affected. The court shall provide notice to the government entities directly affected of (i) the date and time of the hearing and (ii) the right to be heard and make an objection to the remission or waiver of all or part of the order of court costs at least 15 days prior to hearing. Notice shall be made to the government entities affected by first-class mail to the address provided for receipt of court costs paid pursuant to the order.” This provision takes effect on December 1.

Fines are used as a source of punishment by the court system when a crime or infraction is committed. A judge may waive part or all of the court costs when a defendant appears to be indigent. According to the *Charlotte Observer*, more than 300 people were locked up in the Mecklenburg County jail because of unpaid fines; that equates to 18 percent of the jail’s average daily population. About 933,000 North Carolina citizens have their driver’s license suspended due to money that they owe the courts.

The state Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) rolled out a plan as a solution to lighten the load. There are 615 state and local entities across the state that would require notice of waived court fees. The AOC would mail a standard letter once per month instead of notifying every affected entity individually. The letter would include the internet address of the state’s online courts calendar and inform officials of the opportunity to waive fees at any criminal hearing on the calendar. The plan would have to satisfy the GOP legislators. Data released by the AOC showed that only eight percent of criminal court costs were waived by judges in 2016 across the state.

**“Many citizens face traffic violations or other minor offenses in which they cannot afford the high court costs. We should make it easier, not harder, for low-income citizens to pay their debts,” said Senator Joyce Waddell.**



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