The San Francisco Public Defender’s office also began examining fines and fees charged to clients in their Clean Slate program, which works with people to expunge their criminal records in order to secure stable employment, housing, and get back on their feet.

The image below is of a bill received in 2017 by an individual in the San Francisco Public Defender’s Clean Slate program, who hoped to clear his record to gain stable employment. The bill includes two dozen line items for fines and fees he was charged after his conviction in 2013. These fines and fees add up to more than $5,000. Clients need to pay off large portions of their fines and fees before their records can be expunged.

Figure 1: A bill received by a client of the San Francisco Public Defender’s Clean Slate Program in 2017. Source: Public Defender’s Office.

“I have twice faced these fees, and the effort to pay these fees contributed to my eviction and homelessness. The use of these fees to pay for the mechanics of incarceration is disheartening because it makes the system dependent on people staying incarcerated”

- Denny, San Francisco Resident