



Legislation Text

File #: RES 20-488, **Version:** 1

Authorizing the Office of Financial Empowerment to apply to join the Cities and Counties for Fines and Fee Justice initiative and apply for a \$50,000 capacity building grant.

WHEREAS, the City of Saint Paul (the “City”) has established an Office of Financial Empowerment (the “Office”) within the Office of Financial Services; and

WHEREAS, national studies have shown that municipal fines and fees can impose a crushing burden on low-income residents and aggressive debt collection practices can further exacerbate the financial strain on low-income residents; and

WHEREAS, the City authorized the Saint Paul Public Library Debt Write-Off (RES 18-2034) program as part of the 2019 budget, signaling the importance of eliminating barriers to the use and enjoyment of the Library, and benefit the City by increasing access to Library resources for all city residents; and

WHEREAS, the Office furthered advanced its fines and fees justice strategies by being selected by the National League of Cities (“NLC”) Institute for Youth, Education and Families to participate in *Cities Addressing Fines and Fees Equitably* (RES 19-635); and

WHEREAS, the Cities and Counties for Fines and Fee Justice Initiative (“Initiative”) was launched by PolicyLink, Fines and Fees Justice Center, and the Financial Justice Project at the City and County of San Francisco and is seeking applications from municipalities; and

WHEREAS, the City has an interest to analyze other financial barriers that residents of Saint Paul may be facing as a result of additional municipal fines and fees; and

WHEREAS, the Initiative serves to support localities that want to assess and reform fines, fees, tickets, and financial penalties that often have an adverse and disproportionate impact on low-income people and people of color and who are looking for innovators in city and county government who want to take a leadership role in advancing fair and just policies to champion racial equity and smart government; and

WHEREAS, the Initiative will help cities and counties identify and implement reforms that make a difference in the lives of low-income residents and are feasible for government to implement, with the long-term goal to create a cohort of cities and counties that are acting as national leaders by creating models of innovative and effective reforms and inspiring localities across the country to do the same; and

WHEREAS, the Initiative will provide support - including technical assistance, research, best practices, budgeting/revenue forecasting, messaging, and press outreach - to help localities examine and reform fines and fees imposed in their communities if selected to join the Initiative; and

WHEREAS, the Initiative will provide participating localities with grant support of \$50,000 (“Grant”), which can

be used for any purpose related to advancing fine and fee reform, if selected to join the Initiative; and

WHEREAS, the goals and objectives of the Cities and Counties for Fines and Fee Justice initiative and capacity building grant aligns with the goals and objectives of the Office of Financial Empowerment; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that the City Council of Saint Paul does hereby authorize the Office of Financial Empowerment to apply for the Grant in the amount of \$50,000 and join the Cities and Counties for Fines and Fee Justice Initiative.