THE TRAPS OF TEXAS' DEBT-BASED LICENSE RENEWAL PROGRAM

Texas
APPLESEED

1. ATTEMPT TO RENEW LICENSE

"Hi! I'd like to renew my driver's license."

DRIVER LICENSE

DPS Employee

DENIED

2. NOTIFICATION OF HOLD

"We will not be able to renew for you today. It looks like you have a hold on your license. You were pulled over a year ago and never paid the fines associated with the charges."

3. ATTEMPT TO PAY

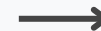"Can I make a payment on the balance right now so I can get my license?"

PAY

4. FULL PAYMENT IS NEEDED

"Unfortunately, you will have to pay the $400 fine and $175 accumulated late fees *in full* before you can renew the license."

5. WHO DO I PAY?

"Once I have the full balance, who do I make that payment to?"

Court → OmniBase

6. PAY THE COURT

"You have to pay the court for the fine and fees, and they will pay OmniBase Services for your hold."

7. NO OTHER OPTION: DRIVING WITH AN INVALID LICENSE

"So I have to drive with an invalid license until I can pay the fines and fees in full?"

DRIVER LICENSE

8. "YES."

Texas' Failure to Appear/Pay Program is riddled with inefficiencies. Texas must end the FTA/P program & implement data-driven strategies to improve court appearance rates.

Problems & Solutions

Debt-based renewal program.
The current system preys on people's incomes (or lack thereof) rather than focusing on their driving habits.

☑ Tailor fines to one's income
☑ Assess for non-monetary sanctions

Duplicative services = wasted resources.
Courts must notify OmniBase of a hold. Then, OmniBase must receive DPS approval to retain the hold. Even when DPS is the deciding factor, OmniBase is a middle man.

☑ End partnership with OmniBase services.

Cycle of debt & system involvement.
Warrants get issued for non-payment, forcing one to settle the warrant or get arrested and face incarceration.
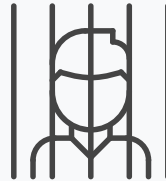
☑ End issuance of warrants for non-payment
☑ Dismiss old cases
☑ Forgive associated debt

More effective methods reduce FTA rates.
Court forms that highlight or bold court information and text message reminders improve appearance rates.

☑ Prioritize communication from the courts to encourage appearance.

The Bottom Line

Texas' Failure to Appear/Pay program is inefficient and counterproductive and thus should be repealed.

The state and courts should opt to support data-driven practices to help Texans get back on the road and back to work!

References

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