

1 By Supervisors Bielinski, Gómez-Tom, O'Connor,
2 Martinez, and Shea

File No. 25-782

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4 A RESOLUTION

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6 Opposing state legislation to increase court fees and surcharges that disproportionately
7 harm low-income individuals and communities

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10 WHEREAS, state legislators introduced Assembly Bill 320 and its companion,
11 Senate Bill 333, which would:

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- 13 1) increase various court fees and surcharges collected by clerks of court,
14 municipal judges, and registers in probate;
- 15 2) increase certain court fees paid to witnesses, interpreters, supplemental court
16 commissioners, court reporters, sheriffs, and appraisers; and
- 17 3) index these and some other fee and surcharge amounts for inflation; and

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19 WHEREAS, the imposition of court fees and surcharges disproportionately
20 impacts low-income individuals and marginalized communities, exacerbating existing
21 inequalities in the justice system; and

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23 WHEREAS, research by the Brennan Center for Justice has shown that court-
24 imposed fees are an inefficient and unreliable source of government revenue,
25 sometimes costing more to collect than they generate; and

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27 WHEREAS, public resources used to collect court debt could more effectively
28 be allocated to programs that promote public safety, rehabilitation, and community well-
29 being; and

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31 WHEREAS, imposing fees without assessing an individual's ability to pay can
32 lead to cycles of debt, license suspensions, and even incarceration—barriers that
33 hinder reentry and increase the risk of recidivism; and

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35 WHEREAS, raising court fees and surcharges perpetuates a system in which
36 access to justice is determined by one's financial means rather than the merits of their
37 case; and

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39 WHEREAS, Milwaukee County is committed to fair and equitable policies and
40 practices that ensure equal access to justice for all residents; and

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42 WHEREAS, the Committee on Intergovernmental Relations, at its meeting of
43 December 1, 2025, recommended adoption of File No. 25-782 (vote 4-0); now,
44 therefore,
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46 BE IT RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors strongly
47 opposes the passage of Assembly Bill 320 and Senate Bill 333 due to its potentially
48 harmful effects on individuals and communities; and
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50 BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Milwaukee County Office of Government
51 Affairs is hereby requested to communicate the contents of this resolution to the
52 Governor, members of the Wisconsin State Legislature, and the Wisconsin Counties
53 Association.
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56 12/01/25
57 s:\\committees\\2025\\december\\igr dec 1\\resolutions\\25-782 bielinski oppose increased court fees.docx