



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN
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To: Members of the Joint Committee on Finance
From: State Bar of Wisconsin
Date: May 15, 2023
Re: 2023-2025 Budget – Support of Criminal Justice System Funding

The State Bar of Wisconsin appreciates Joint Finance Committee members and elected lawmakers from both sides of the aisle working to address the ongoing staffing issues in our justice system. The State Bar strongly believes that knowledgeable and experienced attorneys on all sides of the criminal justice system are essential to ensure the best outcome for all parties, including victims, the accused, and the taxpaying public.

Over the last few years, a coalition of district attorneys, state prosecutors, the Office of the State Public Defender, and the Director of State Courts have worked in partnership on a funding package that has strong bipartisan support. The State Bar would like to thank members of all the respective groups for coming together to find bold and necessary solutions that are fair and reasonable for all parts of the justice system. **We encourage the Joint Finance Committee to vote in support of the coalition's funding request.**

The State Bar would like to highlight some specific points of support:

- Increases in starting staff salaries for assistant district attorney and public defender staff are greatly needed. It is important to maintain parity for these positions to reflect the work required by both sides allowing for the system to stay fair for all.
- We support the request of \$100 an hour for private bar attorneys, as well as encourage policymakers to look toward indexing to keep pace with inflation and current employment market forces. Increases will improve attorney retention and reduce the likelihood of court backlogs in the future.
- The State Bar supports the continued funding of pay progression for assistant district attorneys (ADAs), deputy district attorneys (DDAs) and assistant state public defenders (ASPDs). The State Bar also urges the legislature to find a long-term solution to the retention of these important attorney positions. Pay progression helps the government retain talented and experienced employees by rewarding attorneys with increasing years of service.
- Increases in staffing levels will greatly improve all levels of services in the system. Getting resolution to cases will support public safety and victims of crime. Solving the criminal backlog will also assist those with cases on the civil side. Additional funding for our courts makes for a more efficient system, which helps all citizen of Wisconsin.

If you have any questions or would like additional information, please contact State Bar lobbyists Cale Battles, cbattles@wisbar.org (608) 250-6077 or Lynne Davis, ldavis@wisbar.org (608) 852-3603.