

DEFENDER ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA

1441 Sansom Street
Philadelphia, PA 19102
(215) 568-3190

KEISHA HUDSON
CHIEF DEFENDER

May 13, 2024

Dear Council President Johnson:

We, the undersigned community organizations, are submitting this letter in support of the Defender Association's budget ask for five (5) additional attorneys, and twenty-five (25) social workers to support their youth and adult clients. Our organizations work in the prevention, intervention, and re-entry spaces. We gather at the Defender Association several times a year to communicate and collaborate on ways we can support their clients. Currently, the attorneys in the youth delinquency practices are carrying significant caseloads approaching twice the caseload recommended by the American Bar Association. The Defender Association needs additional attorneys on staff so they can lower caseloads and ensure they are providing the most effective representation to our their most vulnerable young clients.

25% of the children in the delinquency system have a history of involvement with the dependency system. Children entering the delinquency system all need the assistance of a social worker just as surely as those in dependency do. The Defender Association's delinquency practice unit, which served 1,463 clients last year, currently has five social services advocates. Nearly all the children the Defender Association represents have experienced significant trauma in their young lives. Most reside in communities with high levels of violence, attend under-resourced schools, and have experienced other personal traumas, including that associated with arrest and detention. Every child should have the benefit of a social worker. Having a social worker assigned for the duration of the child's involvement in the juvenile justice system will undoubtedly result in better outcomes. Social workers would place attorneys in the best position to advocate for the most appropriate outcome for their youthful clients by lowering attorney caseloads; support efforts to safely reduce the JJSC population by creating release plans for children housed there; and better support young people returning home from placement or detention.

We all know that once a child enters the delinquency system there is a high possibility that they will become entangled in the adult criminal justice system. More than $\frac{1}{3}$ of the adult clients the Defender Association represented last year had a history of involvement with the delinquency system. Our children and adults need increased support to help them successfully, and in a trauma informed way, navigate the criminal legal system. We know the Defender Association's ask for these resources is a significant one but Philadelphian's, mostly Black and Brown need attorneys who have manageable caseloads, and who have the assistance of dedicated social workers.

We thank you for your continued support for the Defender Association and the clients they serve and appreciate your consideration of this letter.

Respectfully,

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Action Wellness
Beacon Point Recovery Center
Best Outcomes Hub
Casa de Consejeria y Salud Integral
Chester Coalition to Abolish Death by Incarceration
Community Advisory Committee
Digital Defense Project
Frontline Dads
Fruit of the Family Table
Germantown Hub
Goldring Reentry Initiative
Human Rights Coalition
Mothers in Charge
New Leash on Life
People's Paper Co-op
Philadelphia Community Bail Fund
Philly Auto & Parole
Reentry Think Tank
Sankofa Healing Studio
South Philly Hub
West Philly Hub
Why Not Prosper?
Women's Institute for Family Health