



For immediate release

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Supreme Court Names Larry Jefferson Jr. Director of Office of Public Defense

OLYMPIA — Longtime public defense attorney W. Larry Jefferson Jr. has been appointed director of the state Office of Public Defense (OPD) by the justices of the Washington Supreme Court. Jefferson takes over for retired director Joanne Moore, who served as head of the OPD for 23 years.

The Office of Public Defense is an independent judicial branch agency that administers state-funded indigent defense programs – legal representation for those who have a right to counsel but cannot afford attorneys – in courts across Washington state. This includes working on statewide issues of public defense funding, caseload limits, attorney qualifications, parent representation, training and more.

“Joanne Moore directed OPD since the beginning. She did tremendous work guiding the OPD as it tackled the many issues involved in ensuring quality public defense services in Washington,” said Chief Justice Steven González. “The Court is happy to appoint someone of Larry’s qualifications and commitment as the new director of this important judicial branch agency.”

Attorney Marc Boman, chair of the OPD Advisory Committee, said, “The OPD Advisory Committee is very pleased to welcome Larry to the agency. We look forward to working with him on the next challenges involved in supporting strong, equitable public defense in our state.”

Jefferson has been a public defense attorney in Thurston County for more than 16 years and previously worked as a public defender in Kent and Seattle. He helped establish Thurston County’s pretrial diversion program, First Look program, Trueblood Diversion program, and Felony Leadership Improvement Project. He managed the county’s juvenile court and juvenile drug court for three years. Jefferson is current president of the Washington Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers, has served as president of the Thurston County Bar Association and is currently co-chair of the Diversity and Inclusion Section for the TCBA. He has received the

Thurston County Bigelow (Best Attorney) Award and the Local Hero Award from the Washington State Bar Association.

“I am grateful for the trust placed in me by the Advisory Committee and the Supreme Court justices,” Jefferson said. “I am excited to continue and to advance OPD’s work as a support for public defense services across the state. There is plenty of challenge ahead.”

The Office of Public Defense was established by the state Legislature in 1996 "to implement the constitutional and statutory guarantees of counsel and to ensure the effective and efficient delivery of indigent defense services funded by the state." The agency recommends criteria and standards for OPD-funded public defense services; provides oversight of the performance of all OPD contractors; manages and distributes funds to county and city defense systems for the improvement of trial court criminal indigent defense; helped establish and now manages contracts for a statewide Parent Representation Program for parents in dependency and termination cases, and more.

Jefferson said OPD has made a significant difference to public defense offices across the state by working on funding, improvement grants and caseload limits for defenders. “The OPD has been a beacon of light,” he said. “Its mission to ensure effective defense services is a recognition that people without means are still created equal under the law and have a right to protection of their life and liberty.”

To learn more about the Office of Public Defense, visit the agency’s web page at www.opd.wa.gov.

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