



# Wisconsin State Public Defender

**Kelli Thompson**  
State Public Defender

17 S. Fairchild Street, Suite 500  
Madison, WI 53703  
Phone: 608.266.0087/Fax: 608.267.0584  
www.wispd.org

**Jon Padgham**  
Deputy State Public  
Defender

---

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
ISSUED: September 17, 2019  
CONTACT: Randy Kraft 608-267-3587

## **State Public Defender Kelli Thompson statement regarding pay progression legislation**

“The criminal justice system best serves our communities and fulfills the constitutional obligations of assistance of counsel and presumption of innocence if all parts of the justice system have adequate and equitable resources. The release of merit pay funding for public defenders (LRB-4166/LRB-4338) rectifies an imbalance within our justice system.

The FY20-21 budget provided funding to State Public Defender (SPD) staff attorneys at 20% of what their counterparts in district attorney offices were provided. This imbalanced system does not reflect what I believe is Wisconsin's commitment to a fair and just system. The retention of public defender and prosecutorial staff attorneys, with their experience and knowledge, benefits the entire justice system by avoiding the increased costs associated with staff turnover. For the SPD, staff turnover results in re-appointing hundreds of cases which creates disruptions to court calendars that impacts judges, prosecutors, witnesses, victims, and jail staff.

Following passage of the budget, we heard from many legislators and district attorneys about the need to correct this imbalance. I am very thankful to Representatives Loudenbeck, Tusler, and Born and Senators Petrowski, Carpenter, and Wanggaard for authoring this legislation. Having an adequately-resourced justice system promotes effectiveness and efficiency while protecting the safety of Wisconsin's communities and the long-term economic viability of our state.

I look forward to working with the legislature and administration as this bill moves through the legislative process.”

###