



Division of Public Defender Services State of Connecticut

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Division of Public Defender Services Responses to Questions from Appropriations Committee February 26, 2021

- **What is your current filled position count?** 398
- **How many positions does the Governor's proposed budget allow you to fill?**
 - The Governor's FY 22/23 budget will allow us to fill 7 attorney positions. This will allow us to fill positions that have been left vacant due to previous year budget cuts and delayed hiring from the pandemic. There has been an uptick in serious felonies during the pandemic. We also expect there to be a surge of jury trials when court operations normalize. This will include a large number of cases where the clients have rights to a speedy trial. At the same time, retirements from our JD trial offices have increased. While these positions are and will be refilled, the experience and talent of our most senior attorneys is not easily replaced. Staff moving into these trial positions will not be able to handle as many cases and will need mentoring. We will also need staff to handle the regular dockets while these cases are being tried, since there will also be a surge of cases as we deal with the backlog of unrepresented cases. As entry level lawyers, they would be assigned to handle intake of new cases in various G.A. courts in a judicial district, which would free up more experienced staff to assist on trials or cover more serious matters. This will help ensure that we have experienced staff to move into the trial positions as more lawyers retire.
- **How many positions do you feel the agency needs?**
 - The agency needs 13 positions, 12 lawyers and 1 social worker
 - 1 Social Worker. Our social worker staff was decreased due to layoffs in FY 15/16. Currently, several offices have only part time coverage. The social workers are critical to efficient court operations, as they are the people who identify clients' mental health, substance abuse and other issues and are able to formulate plans that result in diversion and case resolutions without incarceration. This additional social worker would provide increased coverage to our juvenile offices, where there is only part time social worker coverage for each office.



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- 12 Lawyers (5 additional to the 7 available with currently proposed funding). This would allow for one additional lawyer for each judicial district and still leave our total position count well under our allocated 451 positions.
- **How many vacancies are in your agency, how many are funded?**
 - We have 60 fulltime and 2 part time vacancies.
 - The Governor's budget provides funding for seven current vacancies. Funding for the rest of our vacancies has been cut in previous years, and those cuts have been annualized so we haven't been able to fill them.