



State of Connecticut

DIVISION OF PUBLIC DEFENDER SERVICES

Office of Chief Public Defender

55 Farmington Avenue, 8th Floor
Hartford, Connecticut 06105
(860) 509-6429 Telephone
(860) 509-6499 Fax

Attorney John R. Day

Chief Public Defender
john.day@pds.ct.gov

TESTIMONY OF JOHN DAY, CHIEF PUBLIC DEFENDER ON GOVERNOR'S PROPOSED FY 27 BUDGET ADJUSTMENTS

APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE, JUDICIAL & CORRECTIONS SUBCOMMITTEE WORKSESSION February 24, 2026

Mission Statement of the Division of Public Defender Services

Striving to ensure justice and a fair and unbiased system, the Connecticut Division of Public Defender Services zealously promotes and protects the rights, liberty and dignity of all clients entrusted to us. We are committed to holistic representation that recognizes clients as individuals, fosters trust and prevents unnecessary and wrongful convictions.

The Public Defender Services Commission is responsible for:

- Defense of indigent accused children and adults in criminal cases and parole revocation hearings,
- Representation in post-conviction proceedings and appeals in criminal, juvenile, and child protection matters,
- Representation for children and indigent adults in child welfare cases,
- Representation of indigent contemnors and respondents in paternity matters in family magistrate court,
- Appointment of Guardians ad Litem and attorneys for children in Family Court where the family qualifies for state-rates.

**Testimony of John R. Day, Chief Public Defender
Governor's Proposed FY 27 Budget Adjustments
Appropriations Committee
February 24, 2026**

The Division is supportive of the Governor including the Agency's proposal to reallocate \$346,616 from the Assigned Counsel account to the Expert Witnesses account. On January 1st, 2025, the eligibility threshold for public defender services was increased from 200% to 250% of the federal poverty level. As a result, the FY 26/27 budget provided funding to the Personal Services and Assigned Counsel accounts to accommodate the increase in caseloads. However, funding was not provided in the Expert Witnesses account, and due to this there currently is a shortfall in the account. The budget adjustment was submitted to adequately fund the Expert account in FY 27. The Division is also supportive of the Governor maintaining funding of \$3.5 million in FY 27 for assigned counsel rate increases while also maintaining funding for two attorney positions for veteran services that will go into effect in FY 27.

Cloud-Based eDefender PDS Case Management System

The Division requested funding of \$564,161 to migrate the current public defender eDefender case management system to a cloud-based system. This would be a transition to eDefender of all Division case files and archives going forward, which includes annual cloud service costs. This transition aligns with modernization efforts and is expected to offer scalability, enhanced accessibility, and potential long-term savings on infrastructure and maintenance. This will allow easy access to case files, especially from one office to another, enhanced remote access and features, centralized management of all case files and archives, improved disaster recovery and backup capabilities and reduced reliance on physical storage and infrastructure. In addition, this will require an additional IT staff member to manage.

The Division requests that the Committee include the Division's funding request of \$479,229 in the Other Expenses account and \$84,832 in the Personal Services account (for a total of \$564,161) in order to allow the current eDefender to migrate to a cloud-based system.