



## AFSCME Support for Public Defense Funding

April 14, 2021

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson, Steiner Hayward and Rayfield and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Alexis Rado. I am a proud AFSCME Local 3668 member and an attorney at Metropolitan Public Defender in Washington county representing parents and children in foster care and juveniles involved in the juvenile justice system. I am a single parent residing in Senate District 17.

I am here tonight to encourage you to support expansion of the Office of Public Defense Services' (OPDS) Parent Child Representation Program (PCRP) to Washington County and to re-establish the \$20 million Special Purpose Appropriation to address pay and other needs in public defense services that Governor Brown included in the Governor's Recommended Budget (GRB).

Metropolitan Public Defender has two offices - one in Multnomah County where they receive PCRP funding for juvenile dependency representation and the other in Washington County where the program has not yet been expanded. My co-workers in Multnomah county rave about the benefits of having access to case managers and how they assist the attorney to develop a full, well rounded approach to helping the client. I have heard stories of how helpful the case managers are to clients who need visitation support and coaching, who need encouragement to engage in treatment and services, and who need help navigating the many systems relating to housing, benefits, and school.

In addition to the case managers, my Multnomah County co-workers have explained that PCRP supports attorney caseload standards, and with technical assistance. In fact, our Multnomah county co-workers have occasionally forwarded us the information they receive as part of the trainings provided by the PCRP. It creates a distinct imbalance where Multnomah County Parent/Child attorneys have access to additional technical assistance and trainings in which we can't participate. This imbalance becomes even more apparent when attorneys in Washington and Multnomah Counties are representing the same client on different matters in each county simultaneously. This is solely created by the separate funding sources with PCRP limited to a handful of counties and the rest of juvenile defense paid for out of OPDS's Professional Services Account for the state's trial level services account.



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This disparity is also causing further disruptions to the workforce. Over the last 6 months, two of my Washington County colleagues have transferred to Multnomah County so that they could join the PCRCP and have the support that the PCRCP provides to Family Defense Attorneys. I live and practice in Washington County and I want to continue to do this important work in Washington County. Washington County families deserve the same opportunities as Multnomah County families.

Similarly, this disparity exists across the other types of representation in public defense. For example clients who could benefit from the more holistic approaches provided through PCRCP are left to fend for themselves in making the connections to mental and behavioral treatment and services, housing or other supports. Providing this same level of support in criminal defense could help us reduce the number of children entering into the foster care system, because we would address the needs earlier.

Please bring the PCRCP to Washington county and invest the \$20 million Governor Brown called for in the GRB to help remove these disparities in public defense services across the state!

Thank you for your work and support for these services.

Alexis Rado  
AFSCME Local 3668  
Metropolitan Public Defender