

Submitter: Simeon Good

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee
On Public Safety

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB5031

Honorable Members of the Public Defense Commission,

At the heart of public defense is a promise: that every person, no matter their circumstances, deserves a fair and thorough defense. But right now, that promise is at risk.

Investigators play a crucial role in uncovering the truth, ensuring that evidence is found, witnesses are interviewed, and cases are built with care. Yet, they are paid less today—when adjusted for inflation—than they were in 1985. As a result, we are losing skilled investigators, leaving attorneys stretched too thin, and delaying justice for those who need it most.

The Governor's budget takes an important step in correcting this, but delaying implementation until 2026 only deepens the crisis. Every extra day means more defendants waiting for their cases to move forward, more people sitting in jail when they shouldn't be, and more missed opportunities to uncover critical facts.

To truly address the public defense crisis, we must continue to invest in the people who make justice possible.

Respectfully,