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State Public Defender Chiarkas Applauds Legislation to Reform Public Defender Eligibility

(Madison) State Public Defender Nicholas L. Chiarkas applauds the upcoming introduction of legislation that will update the eligibility standards for State Public Defender (SPD) legal representation. Such eligibility standards have not been updated in 20 years, leaving many without access to justice.

The bill aligns the SPD's eligibility standards with those for Wisconsin Works or W-2. The SPD's current standards are based on the obsolete AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) tables.

State Public Defender Chiarkas praised the legislation, "Let's not forget that defending the poor is a basic constitutional right. Unfortunately, many of our needy are left with the feeling that this right exists in words only. This bill will replace that perception with the reality of 'justice for all'."

Public Defender Board Chair Daniel Berkos added, "The fact that this piece of legislation appeals to both sides of the aisle speaks to the sound necessity of the measure. On behalf of the Public Defender Board, I thank Senator Sullivan and Representative Bies for their sponsorship as well as the other legislators that support it."

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