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THE STATE OF NEW HAMPSHIRE
 JUDICIAL COUNCIL
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March 8, 2022

The Honorable Karen Umberger, Chairman
 Fiscal Committee of the General Court
 State House
 Concord, N.H. 03301

His Excellency, Governor Christopher T. Sununu
 And the Honorable Executive Council
 State House
 Concord, N.H. 03301

REQUESTED ACTION

Pursuant to RSA 604-A:1-b, Additional Funding, authorize the Judicial Council to receive an additional appropriation from funds not otherwise appropriated in the total amount of \$2,302,141, to provide a temporary salary increase to Public Defender Program staff, effective upon Fiscal Committee and Governor and Council approval, through June 30, 2023. **100% General Funds.** Funding is to be budgeted in 02-07-07-070010-10940000 PUBLIC DEFENDER PROGRAM as follows:

FY	Accounting Unit	Class/Expense	Class Title	Current Budget	Change	Revised Budget
2022	10940000	102/500751	Contracts for Program Services	\$23,751,832	\$460,428	\$24,212,260
2023	10940000	102/500751	Contracts for Program Services	\$23,751,832	\$1,841,713	\$25,593,545

EXPLANATION

This is an unprecedented request by the Judicial Council in response to the indigent defense crisis facing New Hampshire. Approximately 800 defendants – including incarcerated individuals – are currently waiting to have an attorney appointed to their case as required by both the United States and New Hampshire Constitutions. The New Hampshire Public Defender (NHPD) is the backbone of our indigent defense system. In a typical year, NHPD handles 85% of the indigent caseload. Historically, contract attorneys – private lawyers who enter into contracts with the Judicial Council – handle the conflict cases, usually 14% of the caseload and assigned counsel – private attorneys accepting court-appointed cases – handle the remaining 1%.

High staff turnover and case backlogs have created a perfect storm for NHPD. Fewer cases resolved during the pandemic, leading to stagnant caseloads. Criminal justice systems across the country are facing the same crisis.¹

NHPD has the ability to close or reduce intake of new cases if attorney caseloads become excessive. This option has been used sparingly until March of 2021. NHPD has now limited intake at its trial offices across the state, resulting in hundreds of additional cases going to contract or assigned counsel – many more than these systems were designed to support.

Thirty-six attorneys have resigned from NHPD since FY21, citing low salaries and high caseloads as the main factors for their departure. A comparison of salaries for other public defender programs and County Attorney offices revealed a disparity in NHPD salaries. (See Attachments 1 and 2). To address this crisis it is critical to retain as many NHPD attorneys as possible. Without a fully staffed Public Defender, we cannot meet the indigent defense need.

The Judicial Council's priority is to minimize additional NHPD resignations. The Council is seeking a one-time appropriation of \$2,302,141 to assist in these retention efforts. This request will provide NHPD with \$1,721,203 to be used exclusively to address staff attorney retention. Because the NHPD staff attorneys recently voted to unionize, the specific retention efforts will be negotiated with their exclusive representative, the Service Employees International Union (SEA/SEIU). The remaining \$580,937 would be used to support retention efforts for all support staff, IT and administration.

While the requested appropriation is critical to the efficient administration of justice and the protection of constitutional rights, it cannot single-handedly resolve this crisis. The Judicial Council has been working in concert with other stakeholders to address these challenges. In September of 2021, the Supreme Court formed The Criminal Defense Task Force (Task Force) to “assess the current crisis facing indigent defendants...” (See Attachment 3, p. 2). The Task Force “believes that a request for salary adjustments for [Public Defender Office] attorneys, to the extent necessary to align their salaries with those of their counterparts throughout the rest of the criminal justice field, should be made to the Legislature.” (See Attachment 3, p. 3). The Supreme Court has called on the private bar to assist in this crisis and many firms have accepted court-appointed cases. Individual judges also requested assistance from private attorneys. (See Attachment 4).

In October of 2021, NHPD received American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARPA) funding to hire 10 new, temporary attorneys. The current salaries have made it difficult to recruit attorneys. Despite a national advertisement campaign, NHPD has struggled to hire attorneys. Providing the capacity to temporarily increase salaries would assist with recruitment efforts.

The Judicial Council has also proposed an increase in the reimbursement rate for assigned counsel. This request – which is also supported by the NH Bar Association, is pending with the Advisory Committee on the Rules. ARPA funding is being used to provide an additional administrative fee to contract attorneys. Private attorneys from neighboring states have been

¹ [Oregon lawmakers agree to \\$12 million band-aid for ailing public defense system - OPB; 'Great Resignation' hits Florida state attorneys, public defenders offices \(clickorlando.com\); New England public defenders' 'crisis' may lead to poor representation \(providencejournal.com\); https://vtdigger.org/2021/04/21/prosecutors-public-defenders-seek-15-5-million-to-handle-court-reopening/; Exodus of lawyers for low-income Mainers prompts worry that cases won't be covered \(bangordailynews.com\)](#)

recruited to accept court-appointed cases. Despite these joint efforts, the system is not able to meet the current need.

Pursuant to RSA 604-A:1-b, the Judicial Council may request, with prior approval of the Fiscal Committee of the General Court, that the Governor and Council authorize additional funding if expenditures for indigent defense are greater than amounts appropriated in the operating budget.

This Agency will remain at your service to provide any requested information concerning the critical importance of this additional funding to the orderly administration of justice.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully Submitted,


Sarah T. Blodgett
Executive Director

Employer	NH	VT	CT	MA Staff Attorney**	MA Supervising Attorney	MA Senior Trial Counsel	MA Atty. Manager	MN	AK Anchorage Office **
Step 1	\$ 52,950.00	\$ 58,094.00	\$ 72,458.00	\$ 61,000.00	\$ 69,000.00	\$ 91,300.00	\$ 93,600.00	\$ 65,800.00	\$ 68,659.00
Step 2	\$ 55,176	\$ 61,256	\$ 75,356	\$ 61,000	\$ 73,000	\$ 92,450	\$ 94,750	\$ 67,354	TBD
Step 3	\$ 57,411	\$ 64,917	\$ 78,372	\$ 62,000	\$ 74,500	\$ 93,600	\$ 95,900	\$ 68,981	TBD
Step 4	\$ 60,764	\$ 71,469	\$ 81,506	\$ 63,000	\$ 76,000	\$ 94,750	\$ 97,050	\$ 72,608	TBD
Step 5	\$ 65,565	\$ 75,317	\$ 88,157	\$ 64,000	\$ 77,500	\$ 95,900	\$ 98,200	\$ 75,713	TBD
Step 6	\$ 73,639	\$ 79,435	\$ 91,682	\$ 68,000	\$ 81,500	\$ 97,050	\$ 99,350	\$ 78,340	TBD
Step 7	\$ 80,402	\$ 81,786	\$ 95,350	\$ 69,500	\$ 83,000	\$ 98,200	\$ 100,500	\$ 80,968	TBD
Step 8	\$ 81,893	\$ 86,278	\$ 99,164	\$ 71,000	\$ 84,500	\$ 100,500	\$ 101,650	\$ 83,595	TBD
Step 9	\$ 83,383	\$ 90,917	\$ 103,130	\$ 72,500	\$ 86,000	\$ 101,650	\$ 102,800	\$ 86,222	TBD
Step 10	\$ 84,948	\$ 96,138	\$ 107,255	\$ 76,500	\$ 87,500	\$ 102,800	\$ 103,950	\$ 88,850	TBD
Step 11	\$ 86,510	\$ 101,733	\$ 111,548	\$ 78,000	\$ 89,000	\$ 103,950	\$ 105,100	\$ 91,477	TBD
Step 12		\$ 107,016	\$ 116,007	\$ 79,500	\$ 90,500	\$ 105,100	\$ 106,250	\$ 94,104	TBD
Step 13		\$ 110,656	\$ 120,648	\$ 81,000	\$ 92,500	\$ 106,250	\$ 107,400	\$ 96,732	TBD
Step 14		\$ 112,819	\$ 125,476	\$ 82,500	\$ 93,500	\$ 107,400	\$ 108,550	\$ 99,359	TBD
Step 15		\$ 115,066	\$ 130,492	\$ 84,000	\$ 95,000	\$ 108,550	\$ 109,700	\$ 101,985	TBD
Step 16			\$ 134,411	\$ 85,500	\$ 96,500	\$ 109,700	\$ 110,850	\$ 104,614	TBD
Step 17			\$ 138,441	\$ 87,000	\$ 98,000	\$ 110,850	\$ 112,000	\$ 115,466	\$ 106,450
Step 18			\$ 142,589	\$ 88,500	\$ 99,500	\$ 112,000	\$ 113,150		
Step 19			\$ 146,872	\$ 90,000	\$ 101,000	\$ 113,150	\$ 114,300		
Step 20			\$ 151,275	\$ 91,500	\$ 102,500	\$ 114,300	\$ 115,450		
Step 21				\$ 93,000	\$ 104,000	\$ 115,450	\$ 116,600		
Step 22				\$ 94,500	\$ 105,500	\$ 116,600	\$ 117,750		
Step 23				\$ 96,000	\$ 107,000	\$ 117,750	\$ 118,900		
Step 24				\$ 97,500	\$ 108,500		\$ 120,050		
Step 25				\$ 99,000					
Step 26				\$ 100,500					
Step 27				\$ 102,000					
Step 28				\$ 103,500					

Massachusetts steps correspond to law school class year.

**These amounts do not include December 2021 increase.

** Salary range available for various locations. Anchorage has lowest salaries. See <https://doa.alaska.gov/pda/employment/attorneys.html>

Employer	NH Public Defender	Grafton CAO *	Strafford COA 1*	Strafford COA 2*	Strafford Deputy*	Merrimack COA 1	Merrimack COA 2	Merrimack Deputy	Rockingham COA	Rockingham COA Lead	Belkap COA	Cheshire COA	Sullivan COA	Sullivan Deputy
Step 1	\$ 52,950	\$ 62,213	\$ 60,736	\$ 67,246	\$ 83,782	\$ 72,809	\$ 80,132	\$ 85,647	\$ 67,077	\$ 72,654	\$ 63,814	\$ 65,790	\$ 63,581	\$ 82,853
Step 2	\$ 55,176	\$ 64,085	\$ 61,464	\$ 68,640	\$ 86,674	\$ 75,060	\$ 82,611	\$ 88,296	\$ 68,419	\$ 74,107	\$ 66,581	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 3	\$ 57,411	\$ 65,998	\$ 61,464	\$ 68,682	\$ 86,736	\$ 77,382	\$ 85,166	\$ 91,027	\$ 69,761	\$ 75,560	\$ 68,598	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 4	\$ 60,764	\$ 67,974	\$ 63,003	\$ 70,387	\$ 88,920	\$ 79,775	\$ 87,800	\$ 93,842	\$ 71,102	\$ 77,014	\$ 70,658	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 5	\$ 65,565	\$ 70,013	\$ 64,584	\$ 72,134	\$ 91,146	\$ 82,243	\$ 90,516	\$ 96,745	\$ 72,444	\$ 78,466	\$ 72,779	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 6	\$ 73,639	\$ 72,114	\$ 66,186	\$ 73,944	\$ 93,413	\$ 84,786	\$ 93,315	\$ 99,736	\$ 73,785	\$ 79,920	\$ 74,984	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 7	\$ 80,402	\$ 74,277	\$ 67,850	\$ 75,774	\$ 95,742	\$ 87,408	\$ 96,201	\$ 102,821	\$ 75,127	\$ 81,373	\$ 77,210	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 8	\$ 81,893	\$ 76,523	\$ 69,555	\$ 69,098	\$ 98,134	\$ 90,112	\$ 99,176	\$ 106,001	\$ 76,468	\$ 82,826	\$ 79,539	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 9	\$ 83,383	\$ 78,811	\$ 71,282	\$ 79,706	\$ 100,381	\$ 92,815	\$ 102,151	\$ 109,181	\$ 77,810	\$ 84,279	\$ 81,931	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 10	\$ 84,948	\$ 81,182	\$ 73,050	\$ 81,598	\$ 103,085	\$ 95,599	\$ 105,216	\$ 112,457	\$ 79,152	\$ 85,732	\$ 84,344	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 11	\$ 86,510	\$ 83,616	\$ 75,982	\$ 84,906	\$ 105,685	\$ 98,467	\$ 108,372	\$ 115,830	\$ 81,164	\$ 87,911	\$ 86,882	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 12		\$ 86,112	\$ 79,040	\$ 88,296	\$ 108,347	\$ 101,421	\$ 111,624	\$ 119,306	\$ 83,176	\$ 90,091	\$ 89,502	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 13			\$ 83,034	\$ 92,747	\$ 111,010				\$ 85,188	\$ 92,271		Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 14			\$ 87,214	\$ 97,448	\$ 113,818				\$ 85,259	\$ 92,352		Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 15			\$ 91,624	\$ 102,398	\$ 116,646				\$ 85,259	\$ 92,352		Unknown	Unknown	Unknown
Step 16			\$ 96,283	\$ 107,578	\$ 122,574				\$ 85,259	\$ 92,352		\$ 91,603	\$ 85,835	\$ 111,851

*Based on 40 hours/week, 52 weeks/year

Cheshire and Sullivan provided beginning and maximum salaries. It is unknown how long it takes an attorney to reach the maximum reimbursement rate.

Hillsborough Step	Hillsborough COA**	Hillsborough COA**
1	\$ 39,422	\$ 40,605
1P	\$ 40,013	\$ 41,213
2	\$ 47,524	\$ 48,950
2P	\$ 48,327	\$ 49,777
3	\$ 55,337	\$ 56,997
3P	\$ 56,167	\$ 57,852
4	\$ 66,431	\$ 68,424
4P	\$ 67,428	\$ 69,451
5	\$ 77,234	\$ 79,551
5P	\$ 78,392	\$ 80,744
6	\$ 81,015	\$ 83,445
6P	\$ 82,230	\$ 84,697
7	\$ 81,015	\$ 83,445
7P	\$ 82,230	\$ 84,697
8	\$ 81,015	\$ 83,445
8P	\$ 82,230	\$ 84,697
9	\$ 81,015	\$ 83,445
9P	\$ 82,230	\$ 84,697
10	\$ 85,937	\$ 88,515
10P	\$ 87,226	\$ 89,843

**Includes 3% increase effective July of 2021

**NEW HAMPSHIRE
SUPREME COURT**



**REPORT ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE CRIMINAL DEFENSE TASK FORCE**

October 27, 2021

One Charles Doe Drive
Concord, N.H. 03301

**NEW HAMPSHIRE SUPREME COURT REPORT
ON THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE CRIMINAL DEFENSE TASK FORCE**

Background:

In September 2021, Chief Justice Gordon MacDonald requested that Associate Justice Patrick Donovan form and chair a task force, comprised of members of the New Hampshire bench and bar,¹ to assess the current crisis facing indigent defendants in the New Hampshire criminal justice system. The Court acknowledges the essential and difficult work that all members of the criminal justice system perform on a daily basis. Their commitment to maintaining the integrity of New Hampshire's criminal justice system during this difficult time has been nothing short of remarkable, and the Court recognizes that some measure of assistance is needed. Accordingly, the Criminal Defense Task Force's purpose was to identify and recommend measures that the Judicial Branch should consider and adopt to address the acute shortage of criminal defense attorneys willing to represent indigent defendants.

Process:

The Task Force met remotely on two occasions for several hours. Members learned that both the Public Defender's Office (PDO) and County Attorneys across the State are confronting dangerously high caseloads. For example, approximately 2,000 criminal cases now pending in the Circuit Courts need appointed counsel, yet several PDO offices have already reached maximum capacity and cannot accept additional cases. To that latter point, the PDO has lost 28 attorneys in the last 14 months due, in large part, to crushing caseloads. In addition, the Judicial Council has more than 118 new cases requiring appointed counsel. Another 300 cases need to be re-assigned because two contract attorneys have left the program.

After careful consideration, the Task Force drafted several recommendations, which Justice Donovan conveyed to the other members of the Supreme Court. The Court has approved and adopted the following recommendations and reports the measures that have been taken to date.

¹ The following members of New Hampshire's bench and bar participated in the Criminal Defense Task Force: Associate Justice Patrick E. Donovan (chair), Chief Justice of the Superior Court Tina L. Nadeau, Administrative Judge of the Circuit Court David D. King, Attorney General John Formella, Deputy Attorney General Jane Young, Judicial Council Executive Director Sarah Blodgett, Judicial Council Chair Nina Gardner, Public Defender's Office Executive Director Randy Hawkes, Public Defender's Office Director of Legal Services Tracy Scavarelli, Strafford County Attorney Thomas Velardi, New Hampshire Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers President Robin Melone, Manchester City Solicitor Emily Rice, New Hampshire Bar Association Executive Director George Moore. The Supreme Court thanks the Task Force members for their time and efforts.

Recommendations and Responses:

1. Increase Public Awareness: *The present crisis needs to be publicized.*

Efforts to publicize the criminal defense crisis have already commenced with New Hampshire Public Radio interviews of Judicial Council Chair Nina Gardner and New Hampshire Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (NHACDL) President Robin Melone. Efforts to inform and alert legislative leaders likewise need to be made, with the recommended participation of Chief Justice MacDonald and Attorney General John Formella, within the next two weeks. The New Hampshire *Bar News* intends to report on the current state of criminal defense shortages in its monthly publication.

2. Early Case Resolution (ECR): *ECR programs are a necessity given the present overwhelming caseloads that are challenging all participants in the criminal justice system.*

Stafford County Attorney Tom Velardi and PDO Executive Director Randy Hawkes are willing to meet, in person, with the County Attorneys and PDO managers to describe the process, ask for their support, and request that these programs be implemented on a statewide basis. Chief Justice MacDonald and Attorney General Formella are willing to participate in these presentations. The Task Force noted that the ECR message should stress that parties will meaningfully engage in a process that promotes justice and includes victim input. It was also noted that the Hillsborough County Attorney's Office is hiring two additional prosecutors for ECR purposes.

3. Additional Funding: *Additional funding needs to be secured to support contract attorneys.*

Funds from the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) have been approved to reimburse contract attorneys for past administrative costs associated with their increased caseloads. The Judicial Council is prepared to seek supplemental appropriations for increased funding for the PDO program. The Judicial Council is in the process of seeking \$2,066,000 in American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 funds for up to ten new, temporary attorneys to assist with current caseload challenges, additional temporary assistance for contract attorneys, and criminal defense training. That request was approved by the Joint Legislative Fiscal Committee on October 22, 2021, and will be on the agenda for the October 27, 2021 Governor and Council meeting. The Task Force also believes that a request for salary adjustments for PDO attorneys, to the extent necessary to align their salaries with those of their counterparts throughout the rest of the criminal justice field, should be made to the Legislature. The Judicial Council will work with the Attorney General's Office and other partners to prepare and advocate for this request.

4. Scheduling: *A brief pause in criminal cases would allow practitioners to better assess caseloads.*

The Task Force noted that a pause in trial courts, while it would not reduce caseloads or resolve cases, would provide all criminal practitioners with an opportunity and time to properly evaluate their caseloads. The Court recommends that the Administrative Judges of the trial courts schedule a one-time, one-week pause on all criminal cases in the trial courts during the month of January 2022.

5. Recruitment Efforts: *Judges in the trial courts have and should consider making personal overtures by way of an email or letter to criminal practitioners in their counties to accept contract and/or pro bono criminal cases.*

The Task Force noted that Judge Kissinger has successfully recruited a number of practitioners to accept cases in Merrimack County. Judges Temple and Coburn are making similar efforts in Hillsborough County. The Task Force believes that additional outreach efforts should be made to recently retired practitioners. Letters from Chief Justice MacDonald will assist in this effort. The Task Force recommends, and the Court approves, investigating a manner and method by which malpractice coverage can be secured for retired practitioners willing to accept cases on a *pro bono* basis.

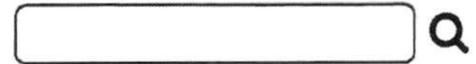
6. Training: *Criminal defense training and mentoring needs to be provided to expand the number of attorneys representing indigent clients.*

The Judicial Council has secured GOFFER funding for criminal defense training. The Task Force believes that training should be developed that focuses on both felony and misdemeanor-level offenses; however, training alone will not secure competent counsel. Mentors with sufficient experience should be identified for attorneys accepting cases following such training. To that end, NHACDL members should be recruited as instructors and mentors. The Bar Association is willing to provide the facility and support necessary to conduct such training. A two-hour training video created by the PDO Program is also available to train out-of-state criminal defense practitioners who are new to New Hampshire.

7. Rule Changes: *Administrative and other temporary rule changes could encourage more attorneys to represent indigent defendants.*

The Supreme Court will propose administrative rules in the Circuit Courts that will permit attorneys to sign and execute waivers and acknowledgments on behalf of informed clients in criminal cases. The Court supports an administrative, temporary amendment to New Hampshire Rules of Criminal Procedure 42(b)(1), which will waive the requirement that bar members appear with *pro hac vice* counsel in criminal cases involving indigent defendants. The Court will also propose temporary administrative rules waiving the fee requirement in such cases. The Court will also propose a temporary amendment to Supreme Court Rule 53 to provide CLE credits to attorneys accepting indigent defense cases on a *pro bono* basis. Although the Task Force was not confident that such

proposals will significantly increase the number of qualified attorneys willing to accept these cases, the Court noted that similar proposals have been adopted successfully in a number of other states.



Superior Court judge makes urgent call to fill need for public defenders

High staff turnover, stagnating cases have contributed to shortage of lawyers

August 16, 2021 by [Scott Merrill-NH Bar News \(https://www.nhbr.com/author/scott-merrill-nh-bar-news/\)](https://www.nhbr.com/author/scott-merrill-nh-bar-news/)



<https://www.nhbr.com/content/uploads/2021/08/u/t/john-ckissinger.jpg>

Merrimack County Superior Court Judge sees a 'crisis' in finding representation for indigent defendants. (Keene Sentinel photo)

A Superior Court judge put out a call on Aug. 11 for attorneys to help fill the gap at the New Hampshire Public Defender because the organization is currently unable to secure representation for indigent criminal defendants in Merrimack County.

In an email to more than 20 attorneys, Superior Court Judge John C. Kissinger said the state is “facing a crisis in securing representation for indigent criminal defendants in Merrimack County.”

New Hampshire Public Defender, which was established in 1972, represents the majority of indigent citizens facing criminal and delinquency prosecution in New Hampshire. It is a private, non-profit corporation and helps to fill New Hampshire’s constitutional obligation to provide equal justice for all under the Sixth Amendment by handling 85% of the indigent caseload.

Kissinger’s email cited high staff departures and “overwhelming caseloads” as part of the cause for what he referred to as an urgent need for attorneys to take cases.

“Effective yesterday, the Concord office of the NH Public Defender program is no longer accepting new court appointed cases,” the email says. “This means that contract counsel, who take conflict cases and are already near or beyond capacity, will be unable to fully meet the need.”

Sarah Blodgett, director of the Judicial Council, which provides funding for The Public Defender and coordinates various civil and criminal justice matters, said The Public Defender has the ability to close or reduce intake of new cases if attorney caseloads become excessive.

“With one exception, the program has not needed to do this for more than 20 years – until now. High staff turnover and case backlogs have created a perfect storm for indigent defense,” Blodgett said.

Continuing resignations

The high staff turnover, combined with fewer cases being heard during the pandemic, has led to stagnant caseloads, she said.

According to Blodgett, 26 attorneys with a combined over 200 years of experience left the Public Defender program in the 2021 fiscal year – more than twice the normal attrition rate.

She said, “An additional six attorneys have already tendered their resignations since July 1st. When attorneys leave the program, their cases are split among the remaining attorneys, exacerbating stress levels and caseloads.”

Blodgett said New Hampshire Public Defender has already had to close intake at its Laconia, Dover, Orford and Nashua offices.

“During these closures, contract attorneys and private attorneys have accepted a huge number of court-appointed cases – much more than these systems were designed to support,” she said. “Our indigent defense system relies on a robust, statewide Public Defender. NHPD is widely recognized as one of the best public defender programs in the country, and it is the backbone of New Hampshire’s indigent defense system.”

Blodgett said New Hampshire Public Defender and the Judicial Council have taken steps to address these issues by recruiting experienced criminal defense attorneys as lateral hires, and by reaching out to the New Hampshire Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers to request assistance with the caseload.

“The Judicial Council has been recruiting new private attorneys to accept cases, but low reimbursement rates and challenging work make both of these efforts difficult,” she said, adding that the Judicial Council has also reached out to the Massachusetts and Vermont associations and have added about 15 attorneys to their panels, as well as trainings for defense attorneys who are new to NH state court criminal practice.

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New Hampshire bankruptcies remain in record-low territory [\(https://www.nhbr.com/new-hampshire-bankruptcies-remain-in-record-low-territory/\)](https://www.nhbr.com/new-hampshire-bankruptcies-remain-in-record-low-territory/)

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