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OF WISCONSIN**Carrie Janto - Statement to Supreme Court-Public Defender rate**

From: Jessica Trudell <jessica.trudell@hotmail.com>
To: "clerk@wicourts.gov" <clerk@wicourts.gov>, "carrie.janto@wicourts.gov" <...>
Date: 4/30/2018 11:56 AM
Subject: Statement to Supreme Court-Public Defender rate

To Whom It May Concern:

I have been a practicing attorney for over 10 years. I started out working for another attorney, however, the majority of my cases were still Public Defender appointments. I ended up starting my own practice 1 year after starting with the other attorney. I ran my own practice for 9 years until recently finding employment with a non-profit. I started out my practice with mainly SPD appointments. I went through several "droughts" where I had to rely on my line of credit or family members to help me out while I was not getting paid. This happened every two years where there was a period of time where we just did not get paid. Currently, it takes nearly THREE months to get paid on a SPD case, resulting in a feeling of being in a perpetual drought.

As my practice progressed and I gained more experience, I took less and less SPD cases and did more county and private work. The county rate was higher and we got paid on a timely basis. After the county I practiced in decided to cut our hourly rates to a flat rate, I decided to look for employment elsewhere. A lot of excellent attorneys are no longer doing county and SPD work because they can no longer afford to do this work. Remember public defenders also represent vulnerable older children in CHIPS cases, those with mental illness and adults under protective placements. There are important constitutional rights at stake and people are not getting adequate representation. There is absolutely a crisis in this state and something needs to change or you will continue to lose good attorneys and it is the poor, children and vulnerable that will suffer. I devoted 10 years of my life to this work and I could no longer do it. At the very end of my practice I was taking cases in neighboring counties so I would get paid at least for travel and mileage. I could travel to the next county and actually be closer than going to court within my own county yet I just lost all of that time if I took a case within county. Just last week I got an email from Marathon County to take a case!! This would be a 3 hour trip one way for me!! So the state is paying attorneys more on these cases to travel hours and hours away instead of just raising the private bar rate. We are the lowest paid private bar appointment rate in the county and the time has long passed for something to change and for attorneys to finally be paid a living wage.

I urge you to increase the SPD rate to \$100.

Sincerely,
Jessica L. Trudell