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As of: May 13, 2016 (2:11pm)

LC6272

**** Bill No. ****

Introduced By *****

By Request of the *****

A Bill for an Act entitled: "An Act changing the duties, responsibilities, and authority of the public defender commission to be advisory only;."

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the State of Montana:

Section 1. Section 47-1-104, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-104. Statewide system -- structure and scope of services -- assignment of counsel at public expense. (1) There is a statewide public defender system, which is required to deliver public defender services in all courts in this state. The system is supervised by the commission and administered by the office.

(2) The commission shall approve advise the executive director on and the executive director shall adopt a strategic plan for service delivery and divide the state into not more than 11 public defender regions. The commission may advise the executive director to establish a regional office to provide public defender services in each region, as provided in 47-1-215, establish a contracted services program to provide services in the region, or utilize other service delivery methods as appropriate and consistent with the purposes described in 47-1-102.

(3) When a court orders the office or the office of

appellate defender to assign counsel, the appropriate office shall immediately assign a public defender qualified to provide the required services. The commission shall advise the executive director regarding and the executive director shall establish protocols to ensure that the offices make appropriate assignments in a timely manner.

(4) A court may order an office to assign counsel under this chapter in the following cases:

(a) in cases in which a person is entitled to assistance of counsel at public expense because of financial inability to retain private counsel, subject to a determination of indigence pursuant to 47-1-111, as follows:

(i) for a person charged with a felony or charged with a misdemeanor for which there is a possibility of incarceration, as provided in 46-8-101;

(ii) for a party in a proceeding to determine parentage under the Uniform Parentage Act, as provided in 40-6-119;

(iii) for a parent, guardian, or other person with physical or legal custody of a child or youth in any removal, placement, or termination proceeding pursuant 41-3-422 and as required under the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, as provided in 41-3-425;

(iv) for an applicant for sentence review pursuant to Title 46, chapter 18, part 9;

(v) for a petitioner in a proceeding for postconviction relief, as provided in 46-21-201;

(vi) for a petitioner in a habeas corpus proceeding pursuant to Title 46, chapter 22;

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(vii) for a parent or guardian in a proceeding for the involuntary commitment of a developmentally disabled person to a residential facility, as provided in 53-20-112;

(viii) for a respondent in a proceeding for involuntary commitment for a mental disorder, as provided in 53-21-116;

(ix) for a respondent in a proceeding for the involuntary commitment of a person for alcoholism, as provided in 53-24-302; and

(x) for a witness in a criminal grand jury proceeding, as provided in 46-4-304.

(b) in cases in which a person is entitled by law to the assistance of counsel at public expense regardless of the person's financial ability to retain private counsel, as follows:

(i) as provided for in 41-3-425;

(ii) for a youth in a proceeding under the Montana Youth Court Act alleging a youth is delinquent or in need of intervention, as provided in 41-5-1413, and in a prosecution under the Extended Jurisdiction Prosecution Act, as provided in 41-5-1607;

(iii) for a juvenile entitled to assigned counsel in a proceeding under the Interstate Compact on Juveniles, as provided in 41-6-101;

(iv) for a minor who petitions for a waiver of parental consent requirements under the Parental Consent for Abortion Act of 2013, as provided in 50-20-509;

(v) for a respondent in a proceeding for the involuntary commitment of a developmentally disabled person to a residential

facility, as provided in 53-20-112;

(vi) for a minor voluntarily committed to a mental health facility, as provided in 53-21-112;

(vii) for a person who is the subject of a petition for the appointment of a guardian or conservator in a proceeding under the provisions of the Uniform Probate Code in Title 72, chapter 5;

(viii) for a ward when the ward's guardian has filed a petition to require medical treatment for a mental disorder of the ward, as provided in 72-5-322; and

(c) for an eligible appellant in an appeal of a proceeding listed in this subsection (4).

(5) (a) Except as provided in subsection (5)(b), a public defender may not be assigned to act as a court-appointed special advocate or guardian ad litem in a proceeding under the Montana Youth Court Act, Title 41, chapter 5, or in an abuse and neglect proceeding under Title 41, chapter 3.

(b) A private attorney who is contracted with under the provisions of 47-1-216 to provide public defender services under this chapter may be appointed as a court-appointed special advocate or guardian ad litem in a proceeding described in subsection (5)(a) if the appointment is separate from the attorney's service for the statewide public defender system and does not result in a conflict of interest."

{*Internal References to 47-1-104:*
47-1-215 }

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Section 2. Section 47-1-105, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-105. Commission -- duties and authority -- report -- rules. The commission may advise the executive director on matters of management and administration and the executive director shall supervise and direct the system. In addition to other duties assigned pursuant to this chapter, the commission may advise the executive director on personnel matters and the executive director shall:

(1) (a) establish the qualifications, duties, and compensation of the chief public defender, as provided in 47-1-201, appoint a chief public defender after considering qualified applicants, and regularly evaluate the performance of the chief public defender; and

(b) establish the qualifications, duties, and compensation of the chief appellate defender, as provided in 47-1-205, appoint a chief appellate defender after considering qualified applicants, and regularly evaluate the performance of the chief appellate defender;

(2) establish statewide standards for the qualification and training of attorneys providing public defender services to ensure that services are provided by competent counsel and in a manner that is fair and consistent throughout the state. The standards must take into consideration:

(a) the level of education and experience that is necessary to competently handle certain cases and case types, such as criminal, juvenile, abuse and neglect, civil commitment, capital, and other case types, including cases on appeal, in order to

provide effective assistance of counsel;

(b) acceptable caseloads and workload monitoring protocols to ensure that public defender workloads are manageable;

(c) access to and use of necessary professional services, such as paralegal, investigator, and other services that may be required to support a public defender in a case;

(d) continuing education requirements for public defenders and support staff;

(e) practice standards;

(f) performance criteria; and

(g) performance evaluation protocols.

(3) review and approve the strategic plan and budget proposals submitted by the chief public defender, the administrative director, and the chief appellate defender;

(4) review and approve any proposal to create permanent staff positions;

(5) establish and oversee a conflicts office with a conflicts manager responsible for conflicts of interest and for ensuring that cases involving a conflict of interest are handled according to professional ethical standards;

(6) establish policies and procedures for handling excess caseloads;

(7) establish policies and procedures to ensure that detailed expenditure and caseload data is collected, recorded, and reported to support strategic planning efforts for the system;

(8) adopt administrative rules pursuant to the Montana

Administrative Procedure Act to implement the provisions of this chapter; and

(9) submit a biennial report to the governor, the supreme court, and the legislature, as provided in 5-11-210. Each interim, the commission shall also specifically advise the executive director regarding the report to the law and justice interim committee established pursuant to 5-5-202 and 5-5-226.

The report must cover the preceding biennium and include:

(a) all policies or procedures in effect for the operation and administration of the statewide public defender system;

(b) all standards established or being considered by the commission, the chief public defender, or the chief appellate defender;

(c) the number of deputy public defenders and the region supervised by each;

(d) the number of public defenders employed or contracted with in the system, identified by region;

(e) the number of attorney and nonattorney staff supervised by each deputy public defender;

(f) the number of new cases in which counsel was assigned to represent a party, identified by region, court, and case type;

(g) the total number of persons represented by the office and the office of appellate defender, identified by region, court, and case type;

(h) the annual caseload and workload of each public defender, except for the chief public defender, and of the office of appellate defender, identified by region, court, and case

type;

(i) the training programs conducted by the office and the number of attorney and nonattorney staff who attended each program;

(j) the continuing education courses on criminal defense or criminal procedure attended by each public defender employed or contracted with in the system; and

(k) detailed expenditure data by court and case type."

{*Internal References to 47-1-105: None.*}

NEW SECTION. **Section 3. Executive director.** (1) There is an office of executive director. The office of executive director must be located in _____.

(2) (a) The _____ shall hire and supervise an executive director manage and supervise the administration and management of offices of public defender, appellate defender, and conflicts. The executive director serves at the pleasure of the commission. The _____ shall establish compensation for the position commensurate with the position's duties and responsibilities, taking into account the compensation paid to executive directors with similar responsibilities.

(b) The executive director must be [qualifications, if any].

(c) The position of executive director is exempt from the state classification and pay plan as provided in 2-18-103.

(3) The executive director shall:

(a) [to be determined].

Section 4. Section 47-1-111, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-111. Eligibility -- determination of indigence -- rules. (1) (a) When a court orders the office to assign counsel to an applicant for public defender services, the office shall immediately assign counsel prior to a determination under this section.

(b) If the person for whom counsel has been assigned is later determined pursuant to this section to be ineligible for public defender services, the office shall immediately file a motion to rescind appointment so that the court's order may be rescinded.

(c) (i) The applicant may request that the court conduct a hearing on the motion to rescind appointment. If the applicant requests a hearing on the motion to rescind appointment, the court shall hold the hearing.

(ii) The sole purpose of the hearing is to determine the financial eligibility of the applicant for public defender services. At the beginning of the hearing, the court shall admonish the parties that the scope of the hearing is limited to determining the financial eligibility of the applicant for public defender services.

(iii) Only evidence related to the applicant's financial eligibility for public defender services may be introduced at the hearing.

(iv) The applicant may not be compelled to testify at a hearing on the motion to rescind appointment.

(v) If the applicant testifies at the hearing, the applicant may be questioned only regarding financial eligibility for public defender services.

(vi) If the applicant testifies at the hearing, the court shall advise the applicant that any testimony or evidence introduced on the applicant's behalf other than testimony or evidence regarding financial eligibility may be used during any criminal action.

(vii) Evidence regarding financial eligibility under this section may not be used in any criminal action, except in a criminal action regarding a subsequent charge of perjury or false swearing related to the applicant's claim of entitlement to public defender services.

(d) If the applicant does not request a hearing on the motion to rescind appointment, does not appear at a hearing on the motion to rescind appointment, or does not testify or present evidence regarding financial eligibility at the hearing on the motion to rescind appointment, the court shall find the applicant is not eligible to have counsel assigned under Title 47 and shall grant the motion to rescind appointment and order the assignment of counsel to be rescinded.

(e) A person for whom counsel is assigned is entitled to the full benefit of public defender services until the court grants the motion to rescind appointment and orders the assignment of counsel to be rescinded.

(f) Any determination pursuant to this section is subject to the review and approval of the court. The propriety of an

assignment of counsel by the office is subject to inquiry by the court, and the court may deny an assignment.

(2) (a) An applicant for public defender services who is eligible for a public defender because the applicant is indigent shall also provide a detailed financial statement and sign an affidavit. The court shall advise the defendant that the defendant is subject to criminal charges for any false statement made on the financial statement.

(b) The application, financial statement, and affidavit must be on a form prescribed by the commission. The affidavit must clearly state that it is signed under the penalty of perjury and that a false statement may be prosecuted. The judge may inquire into the truth of the information contained in the affidavit.

(c) Information disclosed in the application, financial statement, or affidavit is not admissible in a civil or criminal action except when offered for impeachment purposes or in a subsequent prosecution of the applicant for perjury or false swearing.

(d) The office may not withhold the timely provision of public defender services for delay or failure to fill out an application. However, a court may find a person in civil contempt of court for a person's unreasonable delay or failure to comply with the provisions of this subsection (2).

(3) An applicant is indigent if:

(a) the applicant's gross household income, as defined in 15-30-2337, is at or less than 133% of the poverty level set

according to the most current federal poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the United States department of health and human services under the authority of 42 U.S.C. 9902(2); or

(b) the disposable income and assets of the applicant and the members of the applicant's household are insufficient to retain competent private counsel without substantial hardship to the applicant or the members of the applicant's household.

(4) A determination of indigence may not be denied based solely on an applicant's ability to post bail or solely because the applicant is employed.

(5) A determination may be modified by the office or the court if additional information becomes available or if the applicant's financial circumstances change.

(6) The commission shall establish advise the executive director regarding procedures and adopt rules to implement this section. Commission The procedures and rules:

(a) must ensure that the eligibility determination process is fair and consistent statewide;

(b) must allow a qualified private attorney to represent an applicant if the attorney agrees to accept from the applicant a compensation rate that will not constitute a substantial financial hardship to the applicant or the members of the applicant's household;

(c) may provide for the use of other public or private agencies or contractors to conduct eligibility screening under this section;

(d) must avoid unnecessary duplication of processes; and
(e) must prohibit a public defender from performing eligibility screening for the public defender's own cases pursuant to this section. A deputy public defender or individual public defender reviewing another public defender's case may perform eligibility screening pursuant to this section."

{*Internal References to 47-1-111:*

41-3-425 46-8-101 47-1-103 47-1-104
47-1-110 53-20-112 61-5-218 }

Section 5. Section 47-1-118, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-118. Conflicts of interest. (1) The commission shall establish advise the executive director on the structure, purpose, duties and responsibilities of a conflicts office to contract for attorneys to represent indigent defendants in circumstances where, because of conflict of interest, the public defender program is unable to provide representation to a defendant. The executive director shall establish the conflicts office.

(2) The commission shall appoint advise the executive director on the appointment of a conflicts manager to oversee the office. The executive director shall appoint a conflicts manager and the conflicts manager reports directly to the commission and not to the chief public defender executive director. The If the conflicts is an attorney, the conflicts manager may not handle cases.

(3) All attorneys contracted for conflict of interest cases shall report to the conflicts manager."

{Internal References to 47-1-118: None.}

Section 6. Section 47-1-201, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-201. Office of state public defender -- personnel -- compensation -- expenses -- reports. (1) There is an office of state public defender. The office must be located in Butte, Montana. The head of the office is the chief public defender, who is supervised by the commission.

(2) The chief public defender must be an attorney licensed to practice law in the state. The chief public defender is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the commission. The position of chief public defender is exempt from the state classification and pay plan as provided in 2-18-103. The **commission shall** establish compensation for the position commensurate with the position's duties and responsibilities, taking into account the compensation paid to prosecutors with similar responsibilities.

(3) The chief public defender shall hire or contract for and supervise other personnel necessary to perform the function of the office of state public defender and to implement the provisions of this chapter, including but not limited to:

(a) the following personnel who are exempt from the state classification and pay plan as provided in 2-18-103:

(i) an administrative director, who must be experienced in business management and contract management;

(ii) a chief contract manager to oversee and enforce the contracting program;

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(iii) a training coordinator, appointed as provided in 47-1-210;

(iv) deputy public defenders, as provided in 47-1-215;

(b) assistant public defenders; and

(c) other necessary administrative and professional support staff for the office.

(4) Positions established pursuant to subsections (3)(b) and (3)(c) are classified positions, and persons in those positions are entitled to salaries, wages, benefits, and expenses as provided in Title 2, chapter 18.

(5) The following expenses are payable by the office if the expense is incurred at the request of a public defender:

(a) witness and interpreter fees and expenses provided in Title 26, chapter 2, part 5, and 46-15-116; and

(b) transcript fees, as provided in 3-5-604.

(6) If the costs to be paid pursuant to this section are not paid directly, reimbursement must be made within 30 days of the receipt of a claim.

(7) The office may accept gifts, grants, or donations, which must be deposited in the account provided for in 47-1-110.

(8) The office shall provide assistance with the budgeting, reporting, and related administrative functions of the office of appellate defender as provided in 47-1-205.

(9) The chief public defender shall establish procedures to provide for the approval, payment, recording, reporting, and management of defense expenses paid pursuant to this section, including defense expenses paid for work performed by or for the

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office of appellate defender.

(10) (a) The office of public defender is required to report data for each fiscal year by September 30 of the subsequent fiscal year representing the caseload for the entire public defender system to the legislative fiscal analyst. The report must be provided in an electronic format and include unduplicated count data for all cases for which representation is paid for by the office of public defender, the number of new cases opened, the number of cases closed, the number of cases that remain open and active, the number of cases that remain open but are inactive, and the average number of days between case opening and closure for each case type.

(b) The office of public defender is required to report to the legislative fiscal analyst for each fiscal year by September 30 of the subsequent fiscal year on the amount of funds collected as reimbursement for services rendered, including the number of cases for which a collection is made, the number of cases for which an amount is owed, the amount collected, and the amount remaining unpaid. The report must be provided in an electronic format."

{*Internal References to 47-1-201:*

2-15-1028	2-18-103	3-5-511	3-5-604
3-5-901	3-5-901	3-5-901	3-5-901
3-5-901	26-2-506	41-5-111	41-5-1413
42-2-405	46-4-304	46-8-101	46-8-104
46-15-115	46-17-203	46-21-201	46-21-201
47-1-103	47-1-105	47-1-202	50-20-509
53-9-104	53-9-104	53-20-112	53-21-112
53-21-116	53-21-122	53-21-122	53-24-302
72-5-225	72-5-234	72-5-315	72-5-408
72-5-408	}		

Section 7. Section 47-1-205, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-205. Office of appellate defender -- chief appellate defender. (1) There is an office of appellate defender. The office of appellate defender must be located in Helena, Montana.

(2) (a) The **commission shall** hire and supervise a chief appellate defender to manage and supervise the office of appellate defender. The chief appellate defender is appointed by and serves at the pleasure of the commission. The **commission shall** establish compensation for the position commensurate with the position's duties and responsibilities, taking into account the compensation paid to prosecutors with similar responsibilities.

(b) The chief appellate defender must be an attorney licensed to practice law in the state.

(c) The position of chief appellate defender is exempt from the state classification and pay plan as provided in 2-18-103.

(3) The chief appellate defender shall:

(a) direct, manage, and supervise all public defender services provided by the office of appellate defender, including budgeting, reporting, and related functions;

(b) ensure that when a court orders the office of appellate defender to assign an appellate lawyer or when a defendant or petitioner is otherwise entitled to an appellate public defender, the assignment is made promptly to a qualified and appropriate appellate defender who is immediately available to the defendant or petitioner when necessary;

(c) ensure that appellate defender assignments comply with

the provisions of 47-1-202(1)(f) and standards for counsel for indigent persons in capital cases issued by the Montana supreme court;

(d) hire and supervise the work of office of appellate defender personnel as authorized by the appellate defender;

(e) contract for services as provided in 47-1-216 and as authorized by the commission according to the strategic plan for the delivery of public defender services;

(f) keep a record of appellate defender services and expenses of the office of appellate defender and submit records and reports to the commission as requested through the office of state public defender;

(g) implement standards and procedures established by the commission for the office of appellate defender;

(h) maintain a minimum client caseload as determined by the commission;

(i) confer with the chief public defender on budgetary issues and submit budgetary requests and the reports required by law or by the governor through the chief public defender; and

(j) perform all other duties assigned to the chief appellate defender by the commission."

{*Internal References to 47-1-205:*
47-1-105 47-1-201 }

Section 8. Section 47-1-216, MCA, is amended to read:

"47-1-216. Contracted services -- rules. (1) The **commission shall** establish standards for a statewide contracted services

program that ensures that contracting for public defender services is done fairly and consistently statewide and within each public defender region and that contracting for appellate defender services is done fairly and consistently statewide.

(2) The chief contract manager shall oversee the contracting program and may not maintain a client caseload.

(3) The office of state public defender and each regional office, in a manner consistent with statewide standards adopted by the commission pursuant to this section, may contract to provide public defender, professional nonattorney, and other personal services necessary to deliver public defender services within each public defender region. The chief appellate defender, in a manner consistent with statewide standards adopted by the commission pursuant to this section, may contract to provide appellate defender, professional nonattorney, and other personal services necessary to deliver appellate defender services in the state. All contracting pursuant to this section is exempt from the Montana Procurement Act as provided in 18-4-132.

(4) (a) Except as provided in subsection (4)(b), contracts may not be awarded based solely on the lowest bid or provide compensation to contractors based solely on a fixed fee paid irrespective of the number of cases assigned.

(b) Contracts for legal representation of individuals appearing before the following specialty courts may be awarded based on a fixed fee:

(i) a drug treatment court, as defined in 46-1-1103, including an adult, a juvenile, and a family drug court;

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(ii) a mental health treatment court, as defined in 46-1-1203;

(iii) a DUI court, as defined in 61-5-231;

(iv) a court that serves participants with co-occurring disorders, including a mental health treatment court that is combined with a drug treatment court; or

(v) a veterans treatment court.

(c) A contract for legal representation pursuant to subsection (4)(b) may not be awarded without the approval of the commission and without verifiable assurances that effective representation will be provided.

(5) Contracting for public defender and appellate defender services must be done through a competitive process that must, at a minimum, involve the following considerations:

(a) attorney qualifications necessary to provide effective assistance of counsel that meets the standards established by the commission;

(b) attorney qualifications necessary to provide effective assistance of counsel that meets the standards issued by the Montana supreme court for counsel for indigent persons in capital cases;

(c) attorney access to support services, such as paralegal and investigator services;

(d) attorney caseload, including the amount of private practice engaged in outside the contract;

(e) reporting protocols and caseload monitoring processes;

(f) a process for the supervision and evaluation of

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performance;

(g) a process for conflict resolution; and

(h) continuing education requirements in accordance with standards set by the commission.

(6) The chief public defender, deputy public defenders, and the chief appellate defender shall provide for contract oversight and enforcement to ensure compliance with established standards.

(7) The **commission shall** adopt rules to establish reasonable compensation for attorneys contracted to provide public defender and appellate defender services and for others contracted to provide nonattorney services.

(8) Contract attorneys may not take any money or benefit from an appointed client or from anyone for the benefit of the appointed client.

(9) The **commission shall** limit the number of contract attorneys so that all contracted attorneys may be meaningfully evaluated.

(10) The **commission shall** implement rules requiring evaluation of every contract attorney on a biennial basis by the chief contract manager based on written evaluation criteria."

{*Internal References to 47-1-216:*

18-4-132 47-1-104 47-1-205 47-1-215 }

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