

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-19 08:00 AM - (H) JAS on Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement, and Justice

Position: Opponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

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City, State: Missoula, Mt

Written Statement: We need to keep the public defenders office open and funded. As if it was not bad enough that most public defenders act more like a district attorney and do not represent as properly and now their budget is being threaten. I believe that the public defenders needs more money, more stuff and better resources. Please do not remove funds from the only people who seem to "care" about those who's lives at the the hands of the system.

Bill: HB-2: General Appropriations Act 2021-01-18 09:00 AM - (H) JAS on Judicial Branch, Law Enforcement, and Justice

Position: Opponent

Representing an Entity/Another Person: No

Organization: N/A

Name: Laurie Little Dog

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City, State: Bozeman, MT

Written Statement: We, Montanans. have have our right to due process under siege for the past 16 years with an administration that continuously perpetuated the false narrative that those who are apprehended “must be guilty of something”, so therefore... they sure better have the means to hire a private attorney or for a “public defender” well, at least you get one.

The status of the Office of the Public Defender has long been stripped of the necessary tools to do their job. They have overextended caseloads. *I know up in Flathead County A single public defender is carrying 40 to 60 cases at a time!!

With this new (refreshing) administration I don't think we should be at all interested in under-serving Montanan's access to effective representation, especially in a time of crisis.

Right now, hundreds of incarcerated montanan's are sitting in Deer Lodge, in Billings, in Glendive, in Shelby, and Great Falls not because they are convicted of a crime that they actually perpetrated, but because in isolated desperation, they were psychologically compelled into into a baseless plea deal. I have seen this as the normal operating condition of those 'using" a public defender. People in county jail's are showing me their attempts to contact their assigned public defender. Their attempts to justly defend themselves is muzzled at the hands of the overextended Public Defender's office. The public defenders are so over worked that they don't even bother to return these pleas for help.

Montana's will often sit in the county detention facilities somewhere around 11 months before being told the week before the trial that day are going to serve 50 years if they don't take the 20 year plea deal.

Prison costs MONEY!

This is not justice. In practice, it has it has choked out any balance that we all expect to be afforded... should we be merely accused of committing a crime.

Please I do ask that you send us on a path to recalibrating the scales of justice. Restore our access to due process and a fair trial. Together, we can restore montana's criminal justice system by Voting no on house bill 2.

This is not where Gianforte should be cutting the budget. We want to defend Montana citizens. We want to defend freedom and put the people who actually committed crimes in jail and keep those who ARE innocent free. The way to keep them free is to give them proper representation.

It's time to say no to the failures of the public defenders office it's time to give them more public defenders at or equal to county attorneys and prosecutors. We need to balance the scales folks. Who are the people who give out the marching orders. Our rights are protected.

Vote no and do the right thing to reform the justice system in Montana.