



January 30, 2023

Judiciary and Public Safety Committee
Minnesota Senate

Members of the Judiciary and Public Safety Committee:

I am submitting this letter to voice support for Senate File 355 (Board of Public Defense funding).

Americans for Prosperity believes in upholding the constitutional rights of every citizen, and part of that means ensuring that individuals who are facing criminal charges are guaranteed adequate time with their attorney and that their attorney has sufficient time to assess and execute cases in the best interests of their clients.

While we are usually hesitant to support such drastic increases in government spending, the lack of funding for the Board of Public Defense is well-documented and poses a significant problem for those who are in need of a public defender. Not only is the quality of representation affected, but it also exacerbates a significant burden on the attorneys and staff working on these cases. The burnout is real, and public defenders are leaving the profession in record numbers. Also an issue that we hope will be addressed is the salary deficit between prosecutors and public defenders, which causes an imbalance in the profession that aggravates the existing predicament.

We believe that justice should be upheld across the board: an individual should not be punished because of their economic status, nor because of an underfunded state institution. We view this funding as a critical, long overdue improvement of our justice system.

We thank Senator Latz for bringing this legislation forward and respectfully urge your "Yes" vote on this bill.

Sincerely,

RaeAnna K. Buchholz
Legislative & Coalitions Director, Minnesota
Americans for Prosperity