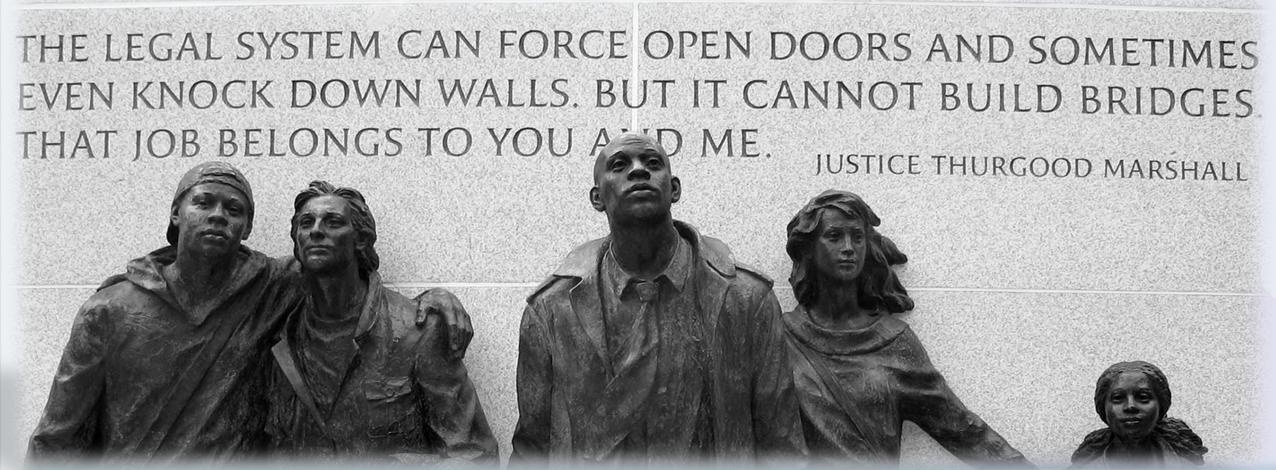


# Department Mission

To protect and defend the rights and dignity of our clients through zealous, compassionate, high-quality legal advocacy



## Department Overview

- The Arlington Public Defender has developed a reputation as a model of zealous, client-centered indigent defense practice.
- The office is a statewide leader in holistic defense, institutional advocacy, and community engagement.





 The office has been an essential partner in the County's efforts to build a more contemporary, evidence-informed, humane, racially-just and equitable criminal legal system.

# FY 2023 Budget Highlights

- <u>Caseload/staffing levels</u>: Although total case numbers have declined slightly during the pandemic, this has not affected overall workload, due to increased case-related demands of clients with serious mental illness, and clearing of the backlog of jury trials.
- <u>Pretrial reform</u>: PD advocacy led to decreased use of cash bail, consistent next-day judicial bond review, greater use of bond diversion—all major reasons jail population is near an all-time low.
- The Public Defender makes diversion work: The Public Defender continues to play a critical role in County-funded diversion efforts, notably the Behavioral Health Docket, which a PD attorney and mitigation specialist attend every week.
- <u>Community engagement</u>: Public defenders have become valuable stakeholders in County efforts to address racial disparities in the justice system, improve police transparency/accountability, and encourage a decarceral, behavioral health-focused approach to serious mental illness.
- <u>Diversity/staff retention</u>: County salary supplements have had an immense impact on the office's ability to recruit and retain a diverse, talented, experienced and dedicated staff. Four of the office's last 5 hires have been people of color, including the individual hired to fill the County-funded paralegal position.

## Focus on Equity



- Racial justice is inseparable from and often synonymous with our mission.
- In addition to fighting zealously for each client, we embrace a duty to share our unique expertise & front-line experience to advance the goals of racial justice/equity in the community more broadly.
- We are committed to a diverse workplace, understanding that Black voices have long been suppressed in the justice system; our advocacy can only be at its strongest when it gives voice to the perspectives, passion, and lived-experience of those from affected communities.

#### FY 2023 Budget Summary

	FY 2022	FY 2023	%	
	Adopted	Proposed	Change	Change
Expenses	\$336,310	\$386,120	+\$49,810	+15.0%

- Personnel expense increases reflect a multi-year initiative to eliminate pay disparities between Arlington's public defenders and prosecutors.
- The "rising tide" created by the County's leadership on pay parity has "lifted boats" in other Va. jurisdictions.
  - Virginia Beach: \$500,000 in supplements for public defender pay in FY 2022.
  - Richmond: \$572,469 for FY 2022; \$1,127,984 for FY 2023.
- Above entry-level, Arlington's public defenders continue to make 15% to 45% less than their counterparts in the Commonwealth's Attorney's Office.

## Key Budget Considerations

- FY 2023 funding is part of a multi-year initiative to provide pay that is competitive with County agencies.
- The proposed \$49,810 increase for FY 2023 will reduce those disparities by 4.5% per position; the Office would therefore request a modest increase—an additional \$50,000—over the County Manager's proposal.
- Salary supplements allow the office to attract/retain diverse, talented, and experienced staff, leveling the playing field between the government and those disproportionately affected by the legal system, and between disadvantaged defendants and those of greater means.
- With the County's support, the Public Defender can continue to help Arlington make extraordinary strides toward developing a truly contemporary, humane, evidence-informed and equitable legal system.

