



Wisconsin State Public Defender

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State Public Defender

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Jon Padgham
Deputy State Public
Defender

Clerk of the Wisconsin Supreme Court
Attn: Deputy Clerk-Rules Petitions
PO Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701

Dear Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court,

The Office of the State Public Defender writes in support of the Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission's proposed revision to SCR 50, commonly known as the Student Practice Rule. The proposed revision would increase our ability to provide legal services to our clients and support a more equitable and diverse membership in the Wisconsin Bar.

The Office of the State Public Defender provides legal services to the indigent population of Wisconsin. We work closely with Wisconsin's law schools to invite interested law students to work in our law firm as student practice rule interns. We have also established a relationship with the University of Minnesota Law School allowing third year students an opportunity to work in our law firm under the student practice rule during their entire third year. As retirements and resignations from our law firm have increased in recent years, the need to expand internship opportunities for out of state law students has also increased.

The SPD recruits, trains, and hires many new law school graduates. The new rule would greatly assist in those efforts. The new rule would allow law school graduates from all states to practice in Wisconsin at our statewide law firm under supervision of a licensed attorney for up to 12 months after their graduation from law school while they study for, and take, the Wisconsin bar exam. The increased amount of legal services would be provided at no extra cost to the community. Allowing a supervision period for out-of-state law school graduates studying for the Wisconsin bar exam will increase the pool of attorneys who can live and work in Wisconsin. These new law school graduates will increase the volume and quality of services provided to our clients.

Wisconsin's diverse population is not currently reflected in our bar, and specifically not in the government and public interest sectors of practice. While the public defender's office strives to have a diverse workforce, the proposed revision to SCR 50 would increase potential diversity of the Wisconsin bar and provide us with additional opportunities in hiring. The proposed revision extends the opportunity to begin serving the Wisconsin community immediately after graduation to all law school graduates, a privilege currently afforded only to Wisconsin law school graduates. The proposed amendment would provide new law school graduates from throughout the country a pathway to practice law in Wisconsin that does not currently exist. These new

graduates would have a positive impact on the Wisconsin economy. Attorneys who begin their careers in Wisconsin are more likely to put down roots and embrace Wisconsin. For many years, Wisconsin has struggled to attract law graduates to serve rural counties. Providing an opportunity for new graduates from across the country an opportunity to work in any of our offices under the proposed rule would improve our efforts.

There are many Wisconsin residents attending out of state law schools. The proposed revision would encourage them to return home to establish their legal careers here following graduation.

For the reasons stated, above the Office of the State Public Defender supports the proposed revision to SCR 50. The revision increases access to legal services, invites students from across the country to begin their legal careers in Wisconsin.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kelli S. Thompson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kelli" being more prominent and the last name "Thompson" written in a smaller, more compact script.

Kelli S. Thompson
State Public Defender