

Dear Mandated Representation Leaders, County and City Partners,

The Director of the Office of Indigent Legal Services serves a statutory five year term pursuant to Executive Law 832. I have been privileged to serve two. I began on February 22, 2011, and I was reappointed by the Indigent Legal Services Board to a second term in 2016. Thus, on February 22 this year, I will have served two full terms as ILS Director. I'd love to stay forever, but I can't. As I approach the age of 75, it is time for me to move on, which I will do at the close of business on June 1, 2021. This will give us time to finish a few tasks, and for our incredibly supportive Board to choose my successor.

These 10 years have been a fascinating challenge and a daily joy. With your help, your collaboration and your support, we have significantly improved the quality of legally mandated representation throughout the state. As I stated in my legislative budget hearing testimony on Wednesday, we have made transformative changes in public criminal defense representation, and we are laying the foundation for comparable improvements in the quality of public parental defense representation. As I have often stated, we could not have accomplished any of this without your support and the active assistance of the NY State Bar Association, the NY State Defenders Association, the Chief Defenders Association of New York, and the New York Association of Counties and its exemplary Executive Director Steve Acquario.

During the three and a half months ahead, we will have a typically busy and ambitious agenda: publishing the Eligibility Standards that the Board approved in December; advocating for \$5 million in Aid to Localities to help counties improve parental representation, and for sufficient funding for NYSDA to continue its essential services; issuing our RFP for a second Model Upstate Family Representation Office; presenting parental representation Caseload/Workload Standards, contingent upon sufficient state appropriations, to our Board for its consideration at its April meeting; completing negotiations with the state Office of Children and Family Services concerning the utilization of federal funding to improve the quality of child welfare representation; communicating with mandated representation providers about the long term vision and near term goals for further improving public defense - and more.

And, of course, we will work closely with the ILS Board as it proceeds to consider applications from qualified candidates and make the best possible choice for the person who will lead this office beginning on June 2, 2021.

It has been a great honor to have served the cause of public defense with you these past ten years. I thank you, one and all. In closing, I would like to salute our two Board Chairs, Chief Judges Lippman and DiFiore; our invaluable Board members who died while in our service, Sue Sovie and John Dunne; the NYSDA visionaries, Jonathan Gradess and Charlie O'Brien, who fought for reform for decades and helped us come into being; our first Counsel Joe Wierschem and our Executive Assistant Tammeka Freeman without whose guidance I would have been lost; and my thought partner throughout this decade, Chief Administrative Judge Larry Marks. There are, of course, many others in the executive and legislative branches whom I will thank separately.

Let's keep this going. Over the next months, and throughout the coming years.

Bill