



## WISCONSIN CATHOLIC CONFERENCE

**TESTIMONY REGARDING SENATE BILL 468 AND ASSEMBLY BILL 501:  
PUBLIC DEFENDER PAY PROGRESSION  
Presented by Barbara Sella, Associate Director  
October 31, 2019**

The Wisconsin Catholic Conference (WCC), the public policy voice of the Catholic bishops of Wisconsin, urges you to support Senate Bill 468 and Assembly Bill 501, which would create pay parity between public defenders and prosecutors.

For many years, the WCC has supported raising the eligibility standards for those in need of public defenders, out of the recognition that justice must be as accessible to those who are poor as it is to those who are affluent.

Today we support paying public defenders the same as prosecutors to ensure that those in poverty have access to the same quality of representation as the state has. Without this, the fair prosecution and vigorous defense so essential to our judicial system will be undermined.

We also support the bills because without parity there simply will not be enough individuals willing to become public defenders. And without enough public defenders, the right to a speedy trial guaranteed by the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution will be denied. It must be stressed that this right not only helps the accused but also the victims, who otherwise must wait months to have their cases resolved.

The WCC commends the authors of this legislation for their bi-partisan collaboration and their recognition that Wisconsin's judicial system must preserve a proper balance between the accuser and the accused.

We respectfully request that the Joint Committee on Finance pass this legislation.