

Submitter: Sean Lo

On Behalf  
Of:

Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means Subcommittee On Public  
Safety

Measure: SB5532

Dear Co-Chairs Evans and Sollman, and members of the Ways and Means  
Subcommittee on Public Safety,

My name is Sean Lo, I am a staff attorney at a nonprofit public defense office and  
member of AFSCME Local 3668.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of increased wages for  
attorneys and staff that provide trial level public defense services through the Policy  
Option Packages.

Currently, my practice consists of representing indigent defendants charged with  
felonies under Ballot Measure 11 and Jessica's Law. These offenses carry  
mandatory prison sentences, where the stakes are high, and demands on time and  
resources are never-ending.

Having served as a public defender for (only) the past 5 years, it was both exciting  
and terrifying that I was being trusted with these kinds of cases, where the outcome  
would have profound effects on the lives of my clients and their families.

Many attorneys have burned out and left our practice before becoming qualified to  
represent these types of clients, and for the few who do make it to this caseload,  
most of them don't last long. Unfortunately, attorneys who become "Measure 11"  
and/or "J-law" qualified often seek employment in the private sector, for more pay  
and less cases, such that experienced practitioners often leave our office for better  
opportunities elsewhere.

Not only do our clients lose out on representation by effective and experienced  
counsel, but young attorneys like me also miss out on guidance and mentorship from  
those who understand what it takes to succeed in this practice.

Increased wages for attorney and staff for trial level public defense will incentivize  
experienced attorneys to continue representing the indigent, fulfill the demands of  
due process and the 6th amendment by addressing the issue of unrepresented  
defendants, and increase the quality of representation for the most disadvantaged  
and marginalized members of our community.

Please make these much-needed investments in our current and future workforce.

Thank you,

Sean Lo