



JUDICIAL ORDER

ORDER OF THE CHIEF JUSTICE

NORTH CAROLINA JUDICIAL BRANCH

NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC DEFENDER DAY

THE PUBLIC DEFENDER SYSTEM IN NORTH CAROLINA BEGAN IN 1970 AND HAS IMPROVED THE SYSTEM OF JUSTICE IN THE STATE AS WELL AS THE LIVES OF THOSE WHO HAVE RELIED ON ITS SERVICES. IN RECOGNITION OF THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE SYSTEM, MARCH 18, 2020 IS HEREBY DECLARED “NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC DEFENDER DAY” FOR THE JUDICIAL BRANCH.

WHEREAS, ON MARCH 18, 1963, THE UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT DECIDED THAT CRIMINAL DEFENDANTS WERE CONSTITUTIONALLY ENTITLED TO THE ASSISTANCE OF COUNSEL IN *GIDEON v. WAINWRIGHT*, 372 U.S. 335, WITH JUSTICE HUGO BLACK NOTING IN THE MAJORITY OPINION, “THAT GOVERNMENT HIRES LAWYERS TO PROSECUTE AND DEFENDANTS WHO HAVE THE MONEY HIRE LAWYERS TO DEFEND ARE THE STRONGEST INDICATIONS OF THE WIDESPREAD BELIEF THAT LAWYERS IN CRIMINAL COURTS ARE NECESSITIES, NOT LUXURIES;” AND

WHEREAS, THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA ESTABLISHED A PUBLIC DEFENDER SYSTEM IN 1970, FIRST IN GUILFORD COUNTY UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF WALLACE C. “WALLY” HARRELSON AND THEN WITH IN CUMBERLAND AND HOKE COUNTIES HELMED BY SOL G. CHERRY; AND

WHEREAS, THE PUBLIC DEFENDER SYSTEM HAS EXPANDED SINCE THEN TO COVER ADDITIONAL JURISDICTIONS, BOTH URBAN AND RURAL, EACH WITH THEIR PARTICULAR CHALLENGES IN PROVIDING QUALITY REPRESENTATION, AND HAS GROWN TO INCLUDE AREAS OF PRACTICE OTHER THAN CRIMINAL DEFENSE, AND HAS PRODUCED FIVE SPECIALIZED STATEWIDE OFFICES; AND

WHEREAS, PUBLIC DEFENDERS HAVE PROVIDED EXPERIENCED, ZEALOUS, AND SPECIALIZED COUNSEL TO SAFEGUARD JUSTICE FOR 50 YEARS; AND

WHEREAS, PUBLIC DEFENDERS ARE ESSENTIAL TO ENSURING THAT THE JUDICIAL SYSTEM OPERATES FAIRLY, JUSTLY, EFFECTIVELY, AND EFFICIENTLY WHILE ALSO PROTECTING THEIR CLIENTS’ RIGHTS; AND

WHEREAS, PUBLIC DEFENDERS STRENGTHEN THEIR LOCAL JUSTICE SYSTEMS BY BEING AN INSTITUTIONAL VOICE FOR THE DEFENSE, OVERSEEING THE DEFENSE FUNCTION, TRAINING AND SUPPORTING ATTORNEYS, AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE LEGAL COMMUNITY; MOREOVER, THE COMBINED EXPERIENCE, SKILL, AND KNOWLEDGE CONTAINED IN PUBLIC DEFENDER OFFICES ENSURES QUALITY REPRESENTATION.

NOW, THEREFORE, I DO HEREBY ORDER THAT MARCH 18, 2020, BE DECLARED “NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC DEFENDER DAY” FOR THE JUDICIAL BRANCH OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA.

THIS THE 16TH DAY OF MARCH, 2020.

CHERI BEASLEY, CHIEF JUSTICE
SUPREME COURT of NORTH CAROLINA