

OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER

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TESTIMONY OF THE OFFICE OF THE PUBLIC DEFENDER REGARDING:

Senate Bills No. 2141

ENTITLED, ACTS RELATING TO COURTS AND CIVIL PROCEDURE -- PROCEDURE GENERALLY -- FEES

Chairman LaMountain and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

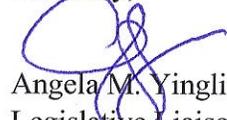
The Office of the Public Defender supports Senate Bill 2141, which would increase fees paid to jurors to fifty dollars (\$50.00) per day. Juror participation is essential to the effective functioning of our justice system; juries serve a vital role in ensuring that trials are fair, equitable, and reflect a true cross-section of society. It is critical that we do all we can to encourage diverse participation in jury service, and increasing juror compensation would significantly contribute to this goal.

Several states have begun to recognize that there is a direct connection between jury fees and the demographic makeup of juries, as lower fees impact the number of excusals for financial hardship. In July 2023, the National Center for State Courts reported, "Six states passed legislation in 2023 to increase juror compensation."¹ This move toward fairer compensation for jury service is crucial for ensuring that juries reflect the demographics of the broader community, thereby enhancing the legitimacy and fairness of trials.

Jury service is one of the cornerstones of our judicial system. By providing fair compensation, we not only recognize the time and responsibility jurors devote but also reinforce the principle that justice should be determined by a diverse group of peers. Without adequate compensation, individuals from lower socioeconomic backgrounds may be dissuaded from participating, which can skew the composition of juries and undermine the system's fairness.

The Office of the Public Defender urges the Committee to support this important piece of legislation.

Sincerely,


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¹ NCSC report, *Six states increase juror pay*, Nat'l Ctr. for State Cts. (July 5, 2023).