

## A RESOLUTION

Recognizing March 18, 2023, as Public Defender Day in Pennsylvania.

WHEREAS, this date marks the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court decision in *Gideon v. Wainwright*; and

WHEREAS, the court unanimously ruled that the Sixth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution guaranteed every person the right to an attorney, regardless of their ability to afford one or the severity of their alleged crime; and

WHEREAS, the ruling spurred nationwide efforts to recruit and train legal defense attorneys for the purpose of providing a public defense; and

WHEREAS, these efforts were built on the legacy of Clara Shortridge Foltz, who first presented her vision for public defense in 1893; and

WHEREAS, public defenders serve to give voice to the otherwise voiceless in our society at their most desperate moments; and

WHEREAS, in order to best serve this purpose, public defenders must have access to the same resources as the prosecution; and

WHEREAS, Pennsylvania remains the only state in the nation that provides zero state funding for public defender offices; and

WHEREAS, this lack of resources strains even the best attorneys and negatively impacts the quality of a legal defense; and

WHEREAS, despite these ongoing challenges, public defenders continue to show up and give their all to their clients; therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the House of Representatives recognizes March 18, 2023, as Public Defender Day in Pennsylvania and honors the hard and selfless work of public defenders across the Commonwealth.