

THE LAW OFFICES OF
THE SHELBY COUNTY PUBLIC DEFENDER

EST. 1917

Advisory Task Force on Composition of Judicial Districts
Administrative Office of the Courts
511 Union Street, Suite 600
Nashville, TN 37219

Re: Thirtieth Judicial District

Dear Chairman Chancellor Forgety and Advisory Task Force Members:

The citizens of Shelby County, Tennessee were among the first in the nation to recognize the importance of indigent defense. More than 100 years ago, Shelby County established what is now known as the Law Offices of the Shelby County Public Defender. Over the years we have grown to be the largest public defender's office in the state. In addition to representing clients in the state trial courts, state appellate courts and United States Supreme Court, we also represent indigent people in the county general sessions courts, juvenile court and in the municipal courts of Bartlett, Collierville, Germantown and Millington. Finally, we are sometimes called to represent indigent people who have been charged with committing the offense of criminal contempt in civil court. In FY2018, we opened more than 25,000 new cases.

I am proud of the work that our office does to ensure that due process is afforded to every client. I am equally proud of the community that understands the importance of the work that we do—often with too limited resources. We have learned to meet the challenge of limited resources, but know that we could not fulfill our mission if we only had the existing level of state funding on which to rely. This past year Shelby County provided approximately 63% of the funding for our law office, while the State provided the remaining 37%. Notably, this reflects a *decrease* in the percentage of our budget funded by the State since 2015. In 2015, the TN Public Defenders Conference reported that the state provided 43.2% of the funding for our office, compared to the 56.8% local funding that we received that year. In contrast, with the exception of the District 20 Public Defender's Office in Nashville, state funding for the other nine public defender

offices that received local funding in 2015 ranged from 66.9% (6th Judicial District) to 99.98% (7th Judicial District).

The citizens of Shelby County expect us to be the watchdogs of the criminal justice system. They expect us to ensure that no one is unfairly convicted or sentenced on our watch. In essence, they expect us to fight to ensure that due process is provided for the poor—not just the wealthy. We can only fulfill these expectations if our local criminal justice system maintains the necessary resources to ensure the zealous, effective representation of our clients. That includes ensuring that there are enough judges to hear our clients' cases in a timely manner. This is no less true for civil cases. Thus, it is my hope that you will not recommend a decrease in the resources allocated to support our justice system in Shelby County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. Aluko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "P" and a long, sweeping underline.

Phyllis Aluko

Shelby County Public Defender, 30th Judicial District
Law Offices of the Shelby County Public Defender

District Public Defenders Conference
 Summary of Court Appropriated Funding
 FY 2015

Judicial District	County/City	% Local	% State
6	Knox	33.1%	66.9%
7	Anderson	0.02%	99.98%
8	Campbell, Claiborne, Scott	4.7%	95.3%
11	Hamilton	26.1%	73.9%
16	Rutherford	4.6%	95.4%
19	Montgomery	0.5%	99.5%
20	Davidson	58.8%	41.2%
26	Madison	13.9%	86.1%
29	Dyers, Newbern (city)	2.4%	97.6%
30	Shelby	56.8%	43.2%