

statement



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**State Bar of Wisconsin Presidents' Comments on Funding for  
Civil Legal Aid and Criminal Justice Funding in  
Governor's Budget**

**February 19, 2025** – The elected leadership of the State Bar of Wisconsin, including Ryan M. Billings, President; Dan Gartzke, President-Elect, and Past President Dean R. Dietrich, is releasing the following statement regarding Governor Tony Evers' civil legal aid and criminal justice budget proposals:

“The leadership of the State Bar of Wisconsin supports Gov. Evers' proposed appropriation for civil legal aid and criminal justice funding in Wisconsin. The addition of this funding is targeted at essential programs to provide fair representation for the administration of justice for all residents. Whether a criminal or civil matter, individuals benefit greatly from the assistance of a lawyer when facing a pressing legal issue.

“Wisconsin has gone far too long without properly funding civil legal aid and this proposed allocation will make a significant impact. Civil legal aid supports eligible individuals and families by resolving civil legal issues and has a far-reaching impact on the judicial system as a whole. Funding will help Wisconsin's most vulnerable families and promote the efficient functioning of the courts, which benefits everyone.

“The criminal justice system funding will build on the bipartisan funding investments from last session's budget. Incremental funding increases for salaries and additional positions for both District Attorney offices and the State Public Defender will provide continued stability for the system and

assist in maintaining public safety and constitutional safeguards for those impacted by the justice system.

“In addition to these important investments, the State Bar will continue to highlight the growing and concerning issue of rural communities that lack meaningful access to attorney services. All reasonable solutions should be explored to further assist

these areas in maintaining access to justice. A good start to addressing the rural attorney shortage is continuing to provide adequate funding to the system.

“We applaud Governor Evers for his dedication to furthering access to justice and urge the legislature to support these funding investments.”