



**For Immediate Release**

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## **Aug. 14 Forum Brings National Perspective to Public Defense Reform, Role of Defense Attorneys** *Statewide conversation offered at 3 Cooley campuses*

LANSING – As work continues at the State Capitol on legislation to reform the state’s system of ensuring a proper legal defense for people who cannot afford an attorney, a public forum will highlight successful reform efforts from other states, discuss the impact those reforms have had on attorneys who provide public defense services and answer the questions of legal professionals in Michigan.

*Improving Public Defense: The Future for Michigan’s Defense Attorneys* will be held on Friday, August 14, from 1 to 3 p.m., at the Thomas M. Cooley Law School campus at 2630 Featherstone Rd., in Auburn Hills. Using live video conferencing technology, the forum will also be available to participants at Cooley campuses in Lansing and Grand Rapids. The event is free and all three locations are open to the public.

"Michigan needs a system in which defense attorneys are provided adequate resources, support, and standards necessary to ensure effective representation," said Laura Sager, director of the Campaign for Justice. "Right now, attorneys are operating in a broken system – they are overburdened and underequipped. This forum will provide a unique opportunity to

***Improving Public Defense: The Future for Michigan’s Defense Attorneys***

**Friday, August 14, 2009**

**1-3 p.m.**

**Thomas M. Cooley Law School**

**2630 Featherstone Rd.  
Auburn Hills, MI 48326**

**Live Video Conferencing at  
Cooley campuses at:**

**111 Commerce Ave., SW  
Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

**and  
300 South Capitol Ave.  
Lansing, MI 48901**

talk about what the future of Michigan's public defense system might look like from the view of the defense bar."

The forum, cosponsored by the Michigan Campaign for Justice, the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, Criminal Defense Attorneys of Michigan and the State Bar of Michigan, will feature the contributions of a number of national speakers, including Randi M. Hood, chief public defender for the State of Montana; Fred T. Friedman, chief public defender of Minnesota's Sixth District and former part-time public defender in the private bar; and Meghan Sutton, a private attorney performing contract work for the Montana Office of Public Defense.

"This forum is a chance for defense attorneys to ask and have answered the hard questions that come with any reform effort of this importance," said, John Nussbaumer, associate dean of Cooley's Auburn Hills campus and a member of the Michigan Appellate Defender Commission. "Questions like: What would the public defense system look like if reform legislation is passed? And, how will new standards impact my practice? These are all important questions that have been answered in other states, and this event provides an opportunity to discuss the answers in Michigan as well."

Chief Justice of the Michigan Supreme Court Marilyn Kelly said the August 14 event "offers a valuable opportunity for the practicing bar to learn about the proposed changes to Michigan's criminal defense system. As with any significant reform effort, it behooves all concerned to be as fully informed as possible. Cooley Law School, the Campaign for Justice, the State Bar, and CDAM are to be commended for providing this educational forum."

Space is limited. For advance registration, please call (313) 310-5666 or (517) 372-3050, or email at [info@mijustice.org](mailto:info@mijustice.org). To submit a question or comment ahead of time, please contact Campaign deputy director Stephanie Chang at [schang@mijustice.org](mailto:schang@mijustice.org).

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*The Campaign for Justice is a broad-based group of organizations and individuals from across the political spectrum fighting for a fair and effective public defense system in Michigan. The Campaign believes that legislative reform is needed to improve cost effectiveness, protect the public's safety and ensure one's Constitutional right to counsel.*

*Cooley Law School is the largest law school in the nation. Founded in 1972, it operates J.D. programs across Michigan in Lansing, Auburn Hills, Grand Rapids and Ann Arbor. Today, Cooley Law School has more than 13,000 graduates across the nation and worldwide and also offers joint degree and master of laws programs. Cooley offers enrollment three times a year; in January, May and September. Additional information about Cooley can be found at [cooley.edu](http://cooley.edu).*