



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

Leaders in the Law. Advocates for Justice.™

PRESS RELEASE

CONTACT: Lisa Roys
Director, Advocacy and Access to Justice
State Bar of Wisconsin
(608) 250-6128
lroys@wisbar.org
www.wisbar.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Sept. 30, 2019

State Bar of Wisconsin Endorses Rural Loan Repayment Pilot Program

Bill Would Strengthen Wisconsin's Criminal Justice System

Madison, Wisconsin – Sept. 30, 2019 – Wisconsin legislators recently unveiled a package of bills that will build upon this session's historic investments in the criminal justice system, addressing years of unmet needs and a growing crisis of fewer private bar attorneys taking public defender cases in many areas around the state.

The State Bar of Wisconsin endorses [Senate Bill 461](#), which would create a student loan reimbursement pilot program. The program would repay up to \$20,000 per year of eligible student loans for private attorneys that take at least 50 public defense cases per year from Wisconsin counties of less than 25,000 people.

"We are delighted to see that the legislature is attentive to the challenges that our state's criminal justice system has been facing and working hard this session to find solutions," says State Bar President Jill Kastner. "Many rural counties in Wisconsin have struggled to recruit and retain enough attorneys to keep the criminal justice system operating smoothly. Likewise, many young criminal defense attorneys struggle with the financial burden of hefty student loans. The State Bar believes that this pilot program could address both issues at once, and hopes that the legislature will move swiftly to put it into place."

The State Bar also endorses [Senate Bill 460](#), which creates a state prosecutor's board and office along the lines of the State Public Defender Board (SPD), as well as [LRB-4166](#), which would fund "pay progression" for the SPD's office, helping the agency to retain experienced attorneys.

###

The State Bar of Wisconsin is the mandatory professional association, created by the Wisconsin Supreme Court, for attorneys who hold a law license in Wisconsin. With more than 20,000 members, the State Bar aids the courts in improving the administration of justice, provides continuing legal education for its members, and assists Wisconsin lawyers in carrying out initiatives to educate the public about the legal system.