

# **Public Appreciation of Alphonso David**

*Sept. 20,*  
**Meeting of Indigent Legal Services Board – ~~June 14~~, 2019**

**It is my privilege to open today's meeting by publicly recognizing Alphonso David,-- Counsel to Governor Andrew Cuomo. On behalf of the Indigent Legal Services Board, I want to express our deep gratitude and appreciation to Mr. David,-- for his extraordinary contributions to improving the quality of mandated representation in New York State,-- and for his invaluable support of the Office of Indigent Legal Services.**

**As many of you are aware, it was not even a decade ago that indigent New Yorkers accused of crimes were forced to rely on an overloaded and underfunded public defense system that in many cases failed to provide the level of legal representation guaranteed to them by the Constitution.**

**Today, New York State is setting the national standard for a well-funded, high-quality public defense system.**

**And the credit for that historic transformation goes, of course, to Governor Andrew Cuomo,-- for his vision and leadership,-- and to Alphonso David,-- for guiding and advising the Governor,-- and working successfully to achieve his vision in Albany.**

**Mr. David's knowledge of our criminal justice system,--  
and astute understanding of New York State politics,--  
enabled him to negotiate and achieve bipartisan support in  
the Legislature for the historic legislation which Governor  
Cuomo proposed in January 2017:--**

- **Extending the key terms of the Hurrell-Harring settlement to all 62 counties in our state; and**
- **Authorizing the Office of Indigent Legal Services to establish and uphold standards requiring the presence of counsel at a criminal defendant's first court appearance;**

- **Setting reasonable limits on the caseloads that public defense attorneys can carry, in order to ensure that they have enough time to mount an effective defense in each case;**
- **And providing for proper training, supervision, and support staff for attorneys; as well as access to support services and special resources needed to mount an effective defense.**

**Of course, these critically important reforms would have been meaningless without the State's commitment to provide the necessary funding support. And here, again, Mr. David played a key role in negotiating with the Legislature to make sure that our State would not only make the necessary fiscal investment in public defense reform,-- but would reimburse**

**counties and cities for the cost of complying with these new standards,-- shifting the fiscal burden of public defense from the counties to the State.**

**Having known Mr. David since I was the District Attorney of Westchester County, it comes as no surprise to me that he was able to shepherd through these critical reforms. As soon as we met, we bonded over our passion for criminal justice reform,-- and our strong desire to make our criminal justice system fairer; . . . more efficient; . . . and more effective.**

**I was immediately impressed by Mr. David's knowledge and understanding of criminal justice issues. And I found him to be intelligent and thoughtful,-- but also practical and politically astute,-- the exact right combination of skills for the important position of Counsel to the Governor.**

**In fact, Mr. David has proven himself to be an excellent lawyer and exceptional advocate for the Governor's reform agenda. His work ethic and preparation are unmatched -- and there is no detail that escapes him,-- no angle or possibility he doesn't consider,-- and he is always accessible, direct and straightforward in his dealings,-- a man of his word.**

**We are truly fortunate to have someone of his caliber as a public servant,-- occupying one of the most influential positions in New York State Government.**

**I know that we as a Board,-- and Bill Leahy as the head of the Office of Indigent Legal Services,-- are proud to be able to work with Governor Cuomo and Alphonso David in carrying out our mission of building a strong, effective and efficient**

**public defense system that safeguards the rights of every person charged with a crime who is legally entitled to an attorney but cannot afford one.**

**Thank you, Mr. David, for everything you have done to improve the fairness and effectiveness of our criminal justice system.**

**And before I turn it over to Bill Leahy, I want to thank everyone in the audience today for taking the time to be here,-- and for your demonstrated interest in our shared public business of maintaining a well-functioning criminal justice system.**