
Cuts to Federal Defenders Undermine Judicial System

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As Americans, we all agree that everyone should get a fair hearing in our nation's courtrooms. Public defenders—lawyers assigned to those unable to afford one—ensure that every American's right to legal counsel, and a fair trial, is protected.

For over 40 years, the federal defender system has served as an essential resource for the 90 percent of people prosecuted in federal courts who cannot afford an attorney. In contrast to several state indigent defense systems, the federal system has been a model. Federal public defenders have had sufficient funding and followed professional standards, thus showing that we can achieve high-quality representation for poor individuals charged with crimes while also helping to make the criminal justice system more accurate and fair.

Today, however, sequestration and other devastating budget cuts to federal defender offices threaten to eviscerate this lauded program. I am deeply troubled by these ill-conceived cost-cutting measures. They achieve no genuine cost savings, and they undermine the federal defender system and the entire federal judicial system.

[Read the full editorial at *The Baltimore Sun*.](#)