



State of North Carolina

ROY COOPER
GOVERNOR

NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC DEFENDER DAY

2020

BY THE GOVERNOR OF THE STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

A PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, on March 18, 1963, the United States Supreme Court held in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, 372 U.S. 335, that the Sixth and 14th Amendments of the U.S. Constitution guarantee the right to assistance of counsel in state courts to criminal defendants who cannot afford to hire counsel, noting, “The right of one charged with crime to counsel may not be deemed fundamental and essential to fair trials in some countries, but it is in ours”; and

WHEREAS, the State of North Carolina recognizes the right to counsel and has extended it to more than criminal cases; and

WHEREAS, North Carolina decided that a public defender system could ensure quality representation through experienced, competent, and specialized counsel, and established the first public defender office on January 1, 1970 in Guilford County, led by Chief Public Defender Wallace C. “Wally” Harrelson, and the second soon thereafter in Cumberland and Hoke counties, under Chief Public Defender Sol G. Cherry; and

WHEREAS, the public defender system has since expanded to cover 18 defender districts and 35 counties, as well as five statewide offices, covering many areas of practice; and

WHEREAS, the public defender offices have been dedicated to safeguarding justice for 50 years, achieving favorable outcomes for clients, working to ensure that our judicial system operates fairly, and strengthening their local legal and citizen communities; and

WHEREAS, by protecting the rights of their clients, the public defender offices protect the rights of everyone who calls North Carolina home;

NOW, THEREFORE, I, ROY COOPER, Governor of the State of North Carolina, do hereby proclaim March 18, 2020, as “**NORTH CAROLINA PUBLIC DEFENDER DAY**” in North Carolina, and commend its observance to all citizens.





Roy Cooper
Governor

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and affixed the Great Seal of the State of North Carolina at the Capitol in Raleigh this ninth day of March in the year of our Lord two thousand and twenty and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and forty-fourth.