

Georgia Association
of
Criminal Defense Lawyers

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June 28, 2020

The Honorable Brian Kemp
Governor, State of Georgia
206 Washington Street
Suite 203, State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Submitted via Electronic Mail to: brian.kemp@georgia.gov

RE: Line Item Veto Request – House Bill 739, Line 3624

Dear Governor Kemp,

The Georgia Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers (GACDL) recognizes the unprecedented pandemic forces that resulted in the difficult budgetary decisions reflected in House Bill 793 (HB 793). Despite this unique reality, *GACDL is calling on you to exercise your constitutionally provided line item veto power to strike line 3624 from HB 793* to ensure funding for constitutionally significant work of the Georgia Public Defender Council.

At each public discussion of the Conference Committee budget, Chairman England clearly articulated the priority of ensuring that no state worker suffer the negative economic impact of multiple furlough days proposed in earlier budget drafts. The adoption of HB 793 demonstrates the General Assembly's commitment to ensuring stable employment income for all state personnel. Unfortunately, the impact of the reduction in line 3624 of HB 793 is inapposite to this goal and reveals the dissonance of publicly promoting the eradication of furloughs.

With 93% of its budget funding direct services, Georgia's Public Defender system is an incredibly efficient organization that cannot lose another dollar supporting its critical work, but the \$400,000 reduction in operations costs in HB 793 at line 3624 does just that. It is GACDL's understanding that this reduction requires the agency to reduce operations by eliminating positions, that is, essentially firing three state employees. One such position offers direct litigation support for the most complex criminal cases.

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GACDL knows you do not take lightly your role in crafting a budget that supports the execution of Georgia's constitutional duties. Similarly, GACDL does not take lightly the devastating impact of cutting necessary agency positions from an already underfunded workforce. If there is anything our organization can do to be a resource to you, do not hesitate for a moment to ask. I am available to you by phone (404-351-3000) or email (lawjzimm@gmail.com) and our legislative team – Jill Travis and Mazie Lynn Causey – are available to you as well. You can reach them at 470-303-4087 and 404-414-7747, respectively.

Sincerely,



Lawrence J. Zimmerman
President

cc: Mr. Tim Fleming, Chief of Staff
Mr. Kelly Farr, Director, Office of Planning and Budget
Ms. Candice Broce, Director of Communications and Deputy Executive Counsel
Mr. Mark Hamilton, Director of External Affairs
Ms. Omotayo B. Alli, Esq., Executive Director, GPDC