



Fixing Michigan's Public Defender System

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LANSING, MI (MPRN) -

Congressional and legislative hearings today will focus on how to fix Michigan's system for providing attorneys to criminal defendants who cannot afford them.

Every county in Michigan has its own way of choosing and compensating attorneys who represent indigent defendants. The work often goes to inexperienced lawyers who are paid very little, and must take on big caseloads to make a living. The system is being challenged in court. .

State Representative Bob Constan has proposed naming a commission to design a system that would employ a mix of public defenders and private attorneys to do the work. But he acknowledges paying for it will be a challenge.

"You know it would be nice if we had a lot of dollars to spend on this, but we don't and that's just a harsh reality - we don't," says Constan.

Advocates say the alternative may be having Michigan's public defense system declared unconstitutional for failing to ensure every defendant a fair trial. © Copyright 2009, [MPRN](#)