

Felony Public Defender “Listening Tour”

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During the Fall 2016 campaign season, the topic of the indigent criminal defense system in our county became an issue when Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh raised the possibility of creating a felony-level public defender's office for Summit County. As this came to the attention of the Akron Bar Association Board of Trustees, a small task force from the Akron Bar's Executive Committee was charged with learning more about the issue. The group, comprised of ABA President Meg Matejkovic, President-elect David Lewis and Secretary Clair Dickinson began meeting with various stakeholders to learn about the issues/and opinions surrounding the new concept.

To date the group has met with the leaders of the Akron Bar Criminal Law Section, Joe Kodish, Prosecutor Walsh and Brad Gessner, the Common Pleas bench, and the Akron & Stow municipal courts. Other meetings are being planned but the goal is to learn as much about the issues as possible and to share the information with the Akron Bar Board of Trustees. While the group isn't close to making any recommendations on the issue, it is learning a great deal. It is anticipated that the board of trustees will ultimately review the issue

and make a recommendation that it believes is in the best interest of our members while adequately addressing the legal needs of the accused to ensure they have the best possible legal defense as guaranteed in our society.

If you would like to add your comments to the "listening tour," please feel free to email them to Akron Bar Executive Director C. Allen Nichols at callen@akronbar.org. All responses will remain confidential. Ultimately, we will share any future recommendations with the Akron Bar Association membership.