San Francisco Public Defender
Mano Raju

Budget Presentation to Board of Supervisors

June 13, 2025

SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLIC DEFENDER

Roadmap

1. Our Mission
2. Our Clients
3. Organizational Numbers
4. Rising Caseloads + Workloads
5. Disparities in Funding
6. Immigration Unit Grant: Accept & Expend

Love, Compassion,
Courage, Excellence.

OUR VALUES

OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

When we fiercely defend individuals, confront state sponsored violence, and advocate for community power, then our communities are better able to resist injustice and fight for self-determination and freedom.

Fiercely
defend
individuals,
confront state
sponsored
violence, and advocate
for community power.

OUR MISSION

OUR VISION

A world where collective
humanity is cherished.

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PUBLIC DEFENDER

Our Clients

- 13% are limited-English proficient and/or immigrants
- 75% have a mental health condition and/or a substance use disorder
- Over 75% are BIPOC
- 100% are low-income

Public Defender

Chief Attorney

Assistant Chief Attorney | **Defend + Advocate**

- Felony + Specialty Courts
- Misdemeanor
- Mental Health
- Youth Defender
- Investigation
- Immigration
- Reentry Social Work
- Paralegal

Assistant Chief Attorney | **Confront + Advocate**

- Law Enforcement Accountability
- Communications
- Clean Slate
- Policy
- MAGIC programs
- The Freedom Project

Assistant Chief Attorney | **Training + Operations**

- Training
- Research
- Pre-Trial Release
- IT
- Clerical
- Attorney Recruitment

Chief of Staff | **Culture + Resources**

- Diversity, Equity + Inclusion
- Intern, Fellow + Volunteer Attorney Programs
- Human Resources
- Budget
- Payroll
- Finance + Accounting

Staffing History

Fiscal Year	General Fund	Grant-Funded	Total Staff
2019-20	194.4	1.6	196
2020-21	200.5	0.5	201
2021-22	205.6	3.4	209
2022-23	215.8	10.2	226
2023-24	229.5	11.1	240
2024-25	238.9	5.3	244

SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLIC DEFENDER

Current Staffing + Vacancies

We have very few open positions (just 2% of our total staffing)

We fill positions as soon as we are able

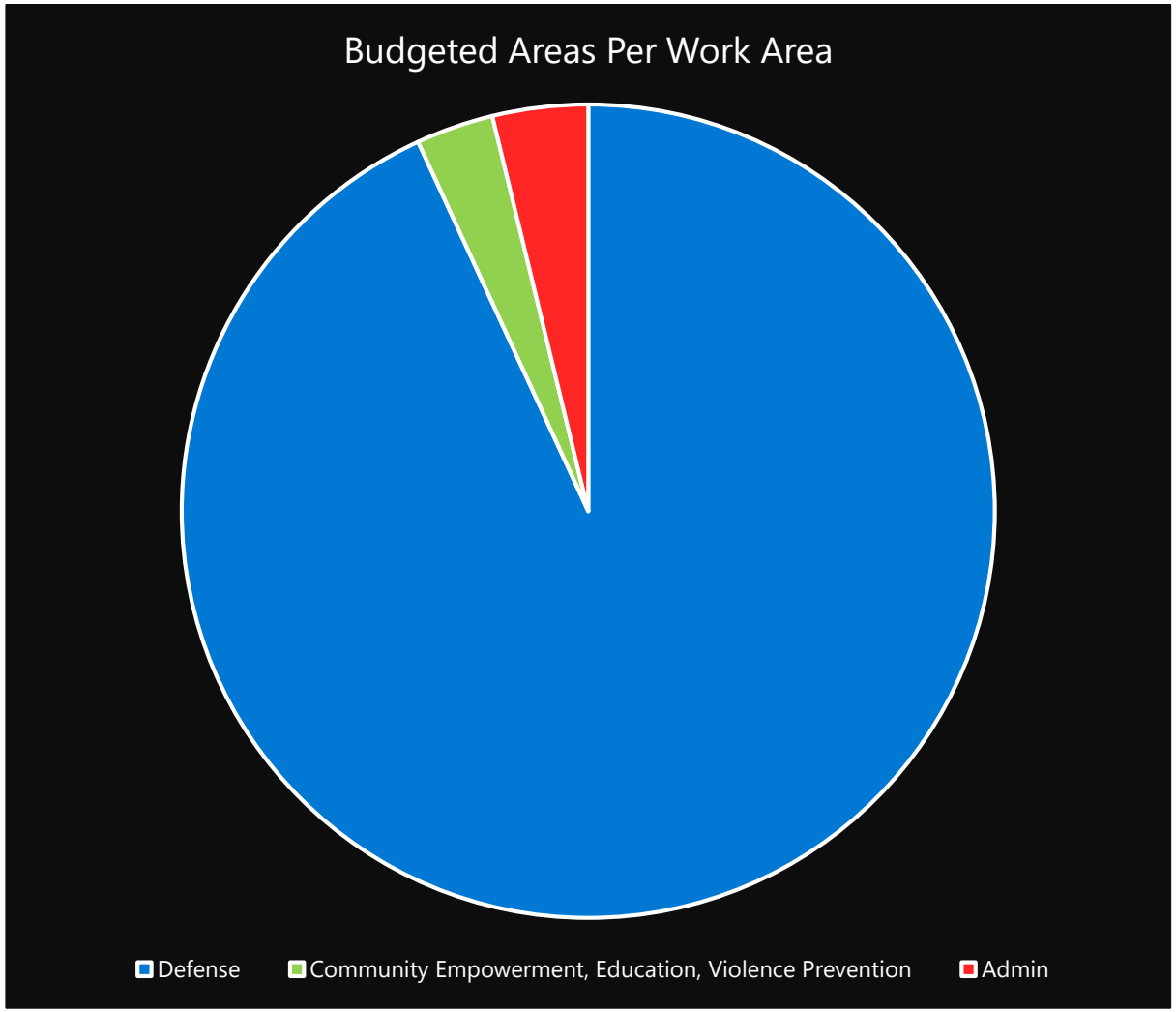
Classification	# of Staff	PEX, PCS, TEX	Vacancies
8196 Public Defender	1	PEX	None
8193 Chief Attorney I	1	PEX	None
8181 Assistant Chief Attorney I	3	PEX	None
8182 Head Attorney	15	PEX	None
8177 Attorney	107	104 (PEX) 3 (TEX)	None
8173 Legal Assistant	33	30 (PCS) 2 (PEX) 3 (TEX)	None
8143 Senior Investigator	13	PCS	**1 (2/21/25)**
8142 Investigator	9	PCS	None
8446 Court Alt. Specialist	12	PCS	**1 (4/13/24)**
8452 Criminal Justice Specialist	7	5 (PCS) 2 (TEX)	None
2910 Social Worker	1	PCS	None
2920 Medical Social Worker	1	PEX	**1 (4/25/25)**
8106 Legal Process Clerk	6	5 (PCS) 1(TEX)	**1 (9/28/24)**
8108 Senior Legal Process Clerk	7	PCS	**1 (S) (2/15/25)**
9975 Sr. Community Dev. Specialist	1	PCS	None
1043 IS Sr. Engineer	2	PCS	None
1094 IT Operations Support Administrator	4	PCS	None
1053 IS Sr. Business Analyst	1	PCS	None
1406 Sr. Clerk	1	1 (PCS) 1(TEX)	**1 (5/27/25)**
1402 Jr. Clerk	2	PCS	None
1825 Principal Admin Analyst II	1	PCS	None
1314 Public Relations Officer	1	PCS	None
1824 Principal Admin Analyst	1	PCS	None
1312 Public Information Officer	1	PCS	None
1632 Sr. Account Clerk	1	PCS	None
1823 Sr. Admin Analyst	1	PCS	None
1670 Financial Systems Supervisor	1	PCS	None
1222 Sr. Payroll + Personnel Clerk	1	PCS	None
0922 Manager I	1	PEX	None
1203 Personnel Technician	1	PEX	None
1244 Sr. Human Resources Analyst	1	PCS	None
Total	239		6

We Defend the Accused

- ***93%*** of our people-power is devoted to ***holistically defending*** the accused in all stages of misdemeanor, felony, mental health, juvenile, and immigration cases

- 4% funds administrative functions (HR, Payroll, Finance)

- 3% funds public education, community empowerment, and violence prevention



Training the Next Generation: Dream Keepers Initiative

- **Litigation Warriors: Internship program designed for 1 attorney, 1 post bar fellow, and 8 law school or undergrad students. $90k in funding.**

- **Courtwatch: Criminal Defense Informational Workshops to educate the next generation of public defenders. $10k in funding.**

PERFORMANCE MEASURES

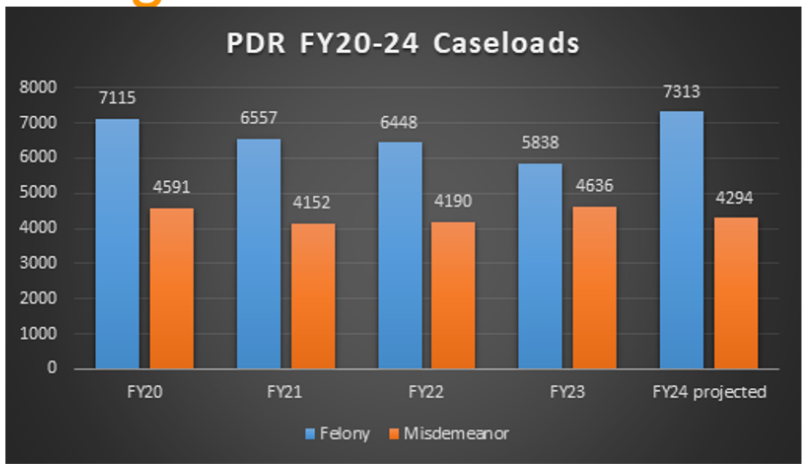
FISCAL YEAR	FY2023-24	FY2024-25		FY2025-26	FY2026-27
GOAL	ACTUALS	PROJECTED	TARGET	TARGET	TARGET
Provide immigration representation					
Number of immigration matters handled	1,194	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Provide re-entry services to clients					
Number of clients referred to services including shelter, housing, drug treatment, mental health treatment, educational and vocational services	266	200	200	200	200
Represent defendants effectively					
Number of felony matters handled	7,701	7,476	6,452	7,313	7,476
Number of juvenile matters handled	12,647	13,698	13,623	13,863	13,698
Number of misdemeanor matters handled	4,575	4,898	4,130	4,294	4,898

Our Biggest Challenge: Rising Caseloads + Workloads

Last Year We Flagged this "Rising Crisis"

Rising Crisis

Average caseloads for line attorneys



Causes:

1) Trial delays/backlog in recent years
2) Increase in arrests by the police and felony and misdemeanor filings by the DA
3) Drastic reduction in referrals to diversion programs and specialty courts
4) Increased workloads due to changes in state law (e.g. Racial Justice Act and Mental Health Diversion) and technological advances (body-worn camera, video surveillance footage and cell phone technology) impacting most cases .

Why Our Caseloads + Workloads Are Increasing

- Increase in Arrests by Police
- Increase in Filings by DA
- Jail Population Rising
- Fewer Cases Settling and/or Being Diverted
- More Litigation and Jury Trials
- Cases Are Increasingly Labor-Intensive to Defend

Why Our Caseloads + Workloads Are Increasing

The San Francisco Standard

News Politics Business Opinion Culture Food & Drink Sports

News

After decades of downsizing, SF jails are suddenly packed again

The city's incarceration rate has surged 10% since December as an era of criminal justice reform comes to a definitive end.

PROSECUTOR BROOKE JENKINS RESHAPING INCARCERATION TRENDS IN SAN FRANCISCO

SF is cracking down on crime and its jails are filling up

By Adam Shanks | Examiner staff writer | Mar 6, 2025 Updated Mar 7, 2025

COVERING THE POLICE

S.F. expands jail capacity, anticipating ramp-up in arrests

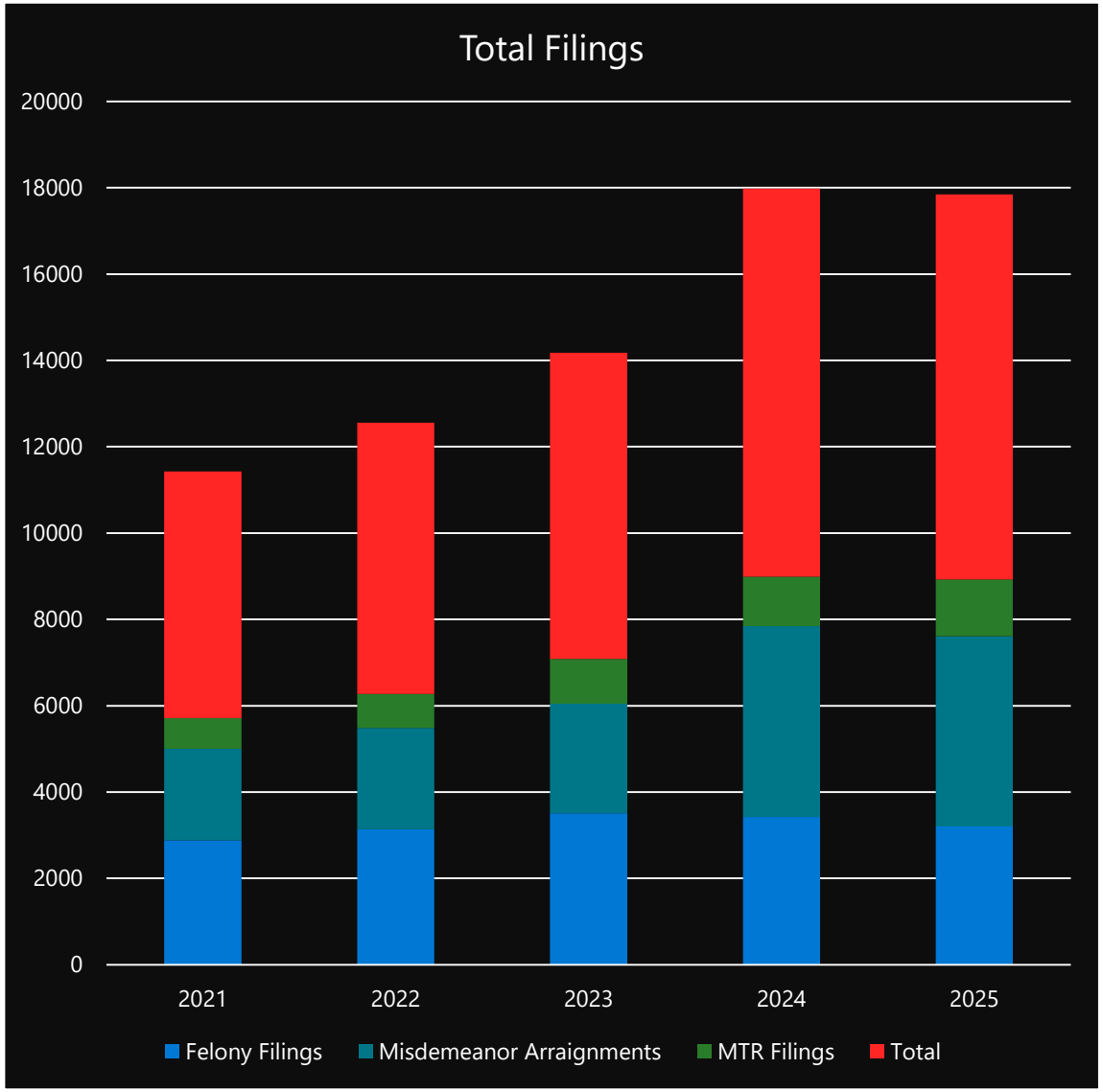
by ELENI BALAKRISHNAN
February 5, 2025, 4:50 pm

San Francisco Chronicle

Underpinning this increase, police have brought far more arrests to the district attorney's office under Jenkins, a shift that began almost immediately after she took office, data shows. (Arrests can be affected both by police priorities and a DA's priorities, since there's no use arresting someone who won't be charged in court.)

Our Caseloads + Workloads Are Increasing

DA Filings have increased by 57% since 2021

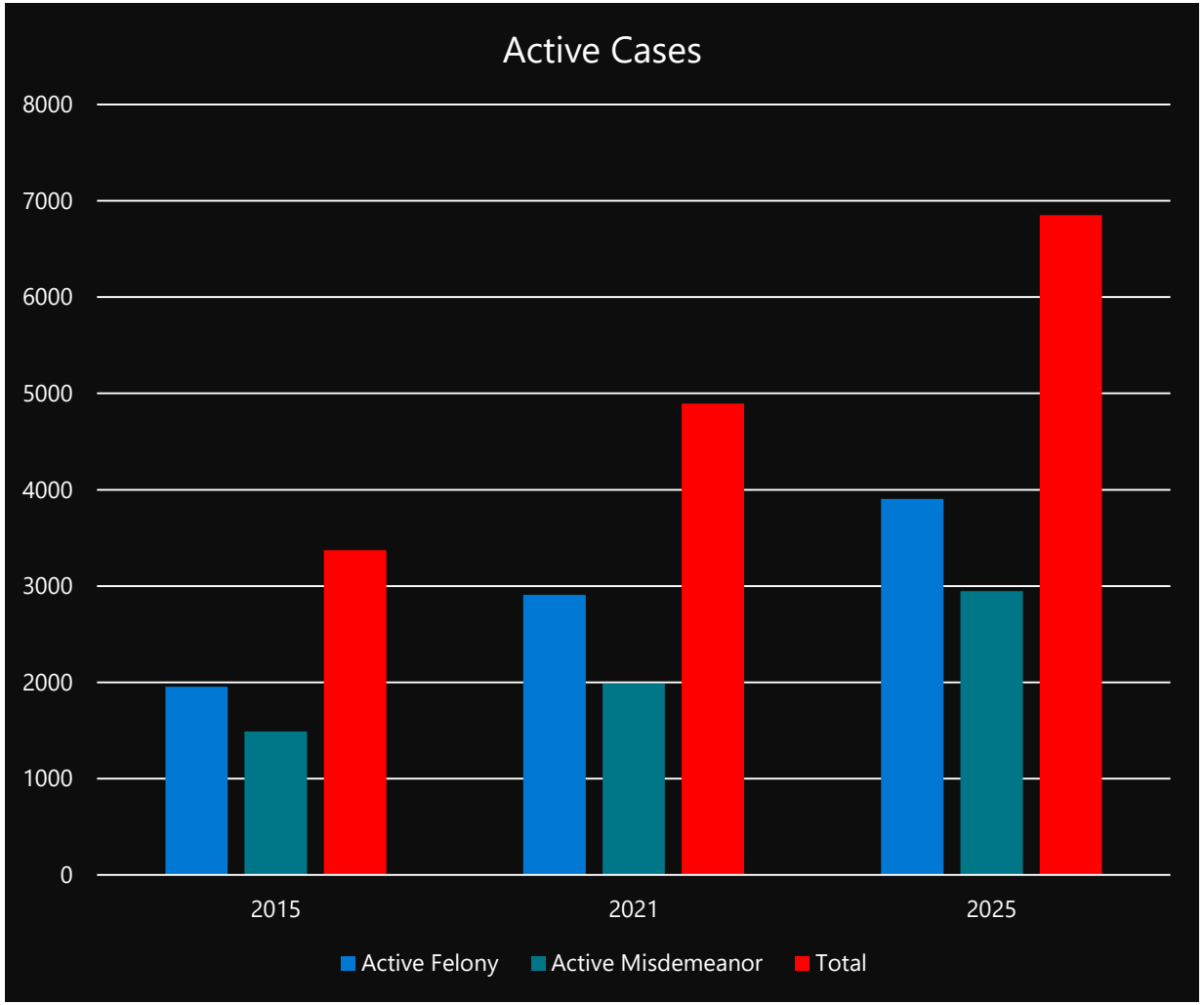


(2025 is projected data)

Our Caseloads + Workloads Are Increasing

Active cases have increased by:

- ***40% in 5 years***
- ***103% in 10 years***



Data from Superior Court's Criminal Case Dashboard

DA Estimates Filing 2,000 *More* Cases Annually

"We anticipate that the police will be arresting more people, and we will need to rise to meet that challenge in charging and seeing cases through to conviction. Estimating an additional 10 arrests a day would result in a 25% increase in annual arrests amounting to approximately 2,000 more cases filed annually."

- District Attorney Budget FY 25-26 Budget Narrative

Evidence Our Caseloads + Workloads Are Increasing

We are on track to complete 150 misdemeanor jury trials in 2025:

- Thus far this year **80%** have resulted in acquittals or hung juries

In 2024, our defense teams took 91 felony cases to trial, the most in the history of our office:

- **40%** resulted in acquittals or hung juries
- **30%** resulted in mixed verdicts

Rising Workloads & Complex Cases

+40%

Increase in bail motions filed in 2024 compared to 2021, driven by jail population being at 100%+.

110+

Increase in California Racial Justice Act motions filed during 2024 and 2025 to address racial bias.

+59%

Increase in body-worn camera footage received and reviewed this year, reflecting more labor-intensive defense work.

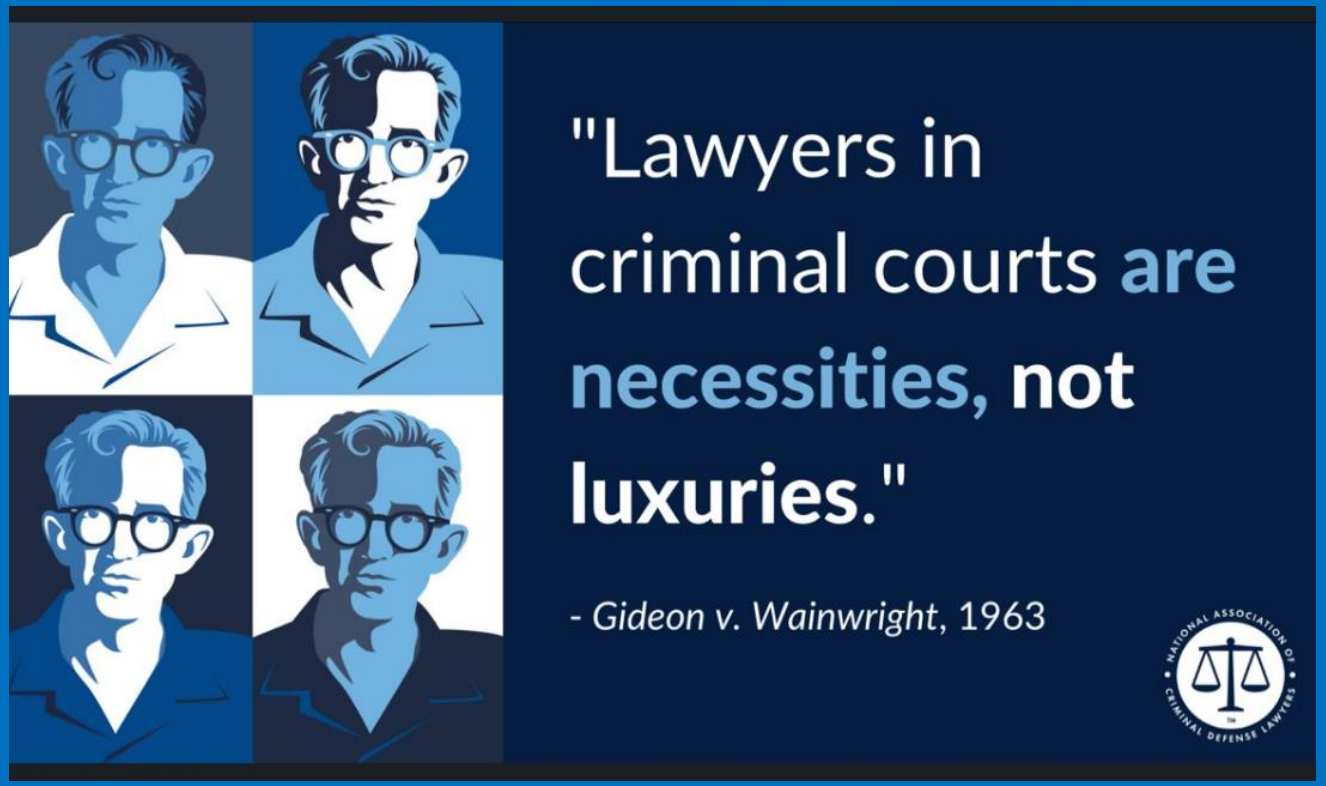
3,100

Cases affected by DA-issued Brady notifications concerning misconduct by SFPD officers, adding complexity to defense efforts.

Declaring Unavailable

To ensure we can:
1) meet our **Constitutional mandate to provide effective assistance of counsel** and
2) give the **appropriate time and attention to each existing client**.

We have **declared unavailable** to accept misdemeanor cases one day a week and select felony cases.



**Clarence Earl Gideon was plaintiff in the landmark US Sup. Ct. case ruling that the 6th Amendment requires attorneys to be appointed to indigent people who are accused.*

Declaring Unavailable Is Grounded in the Law

If workload prevents a lawyer from providing competent and diligent representation to existing clients, she must not accept new clients.

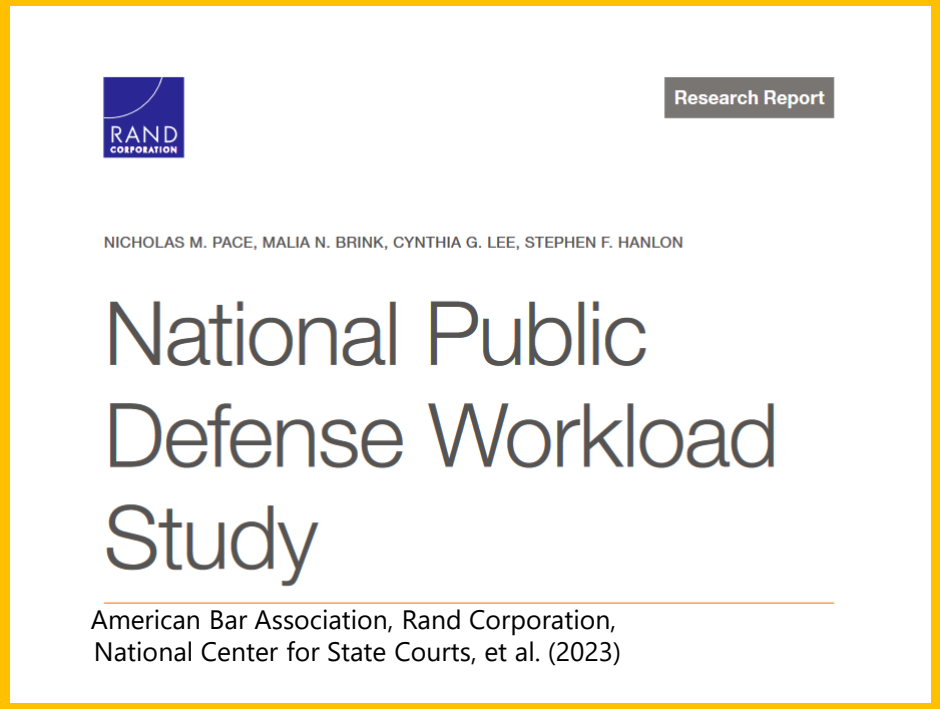
American Bar Association, Standing Committee on Ethics and Professional Responsibility, Formal Opinion 06-441

Under the Penal Code … a conflict of interest is inevitably created when an appointed counsel is compelled by his or her **excessive caseload to choose between the rights of the various indigent defendants he or she is representing**."

In re Edward S. (2009) 173 Cal.App.4th 387.

Defense providers are obligated to take steps necessary to address excessive workload, which can include notifying the court or other appointing authority that the Provider is **unavailable** to accept additional appointments.

American Bar Association
Ten Principles of a Public Defense Delivery System, August 2023



"**Overloaded public defense attorneys simply cannot give appropriate time and attention to each client**.

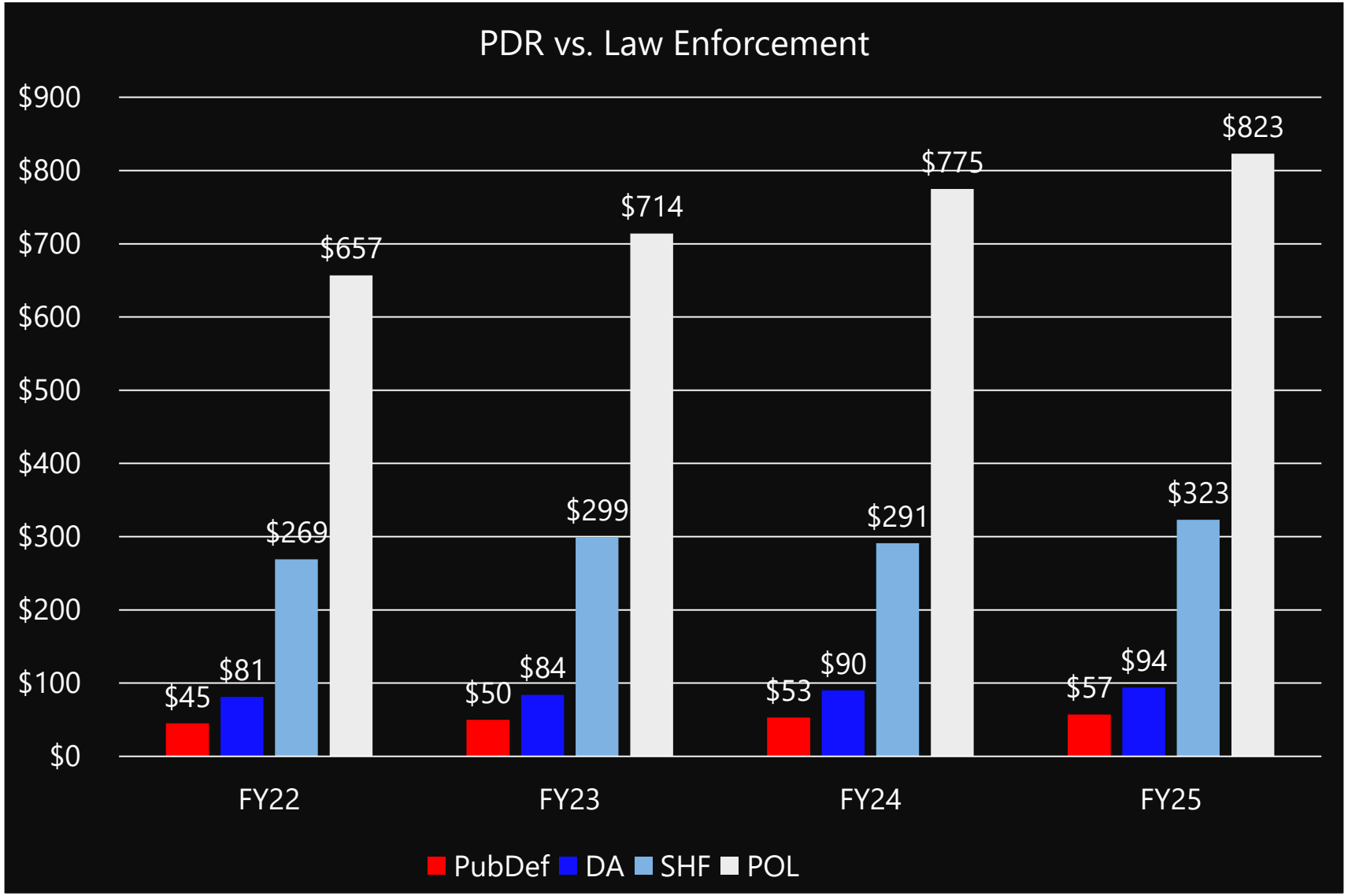
They cannot investigate in a timely manner or fully. They cannot file the motions they should.

Instead, attorneys are forced to triage cases, choosing which cases to focus attention on while allowing others to be resolved without appropriate diligence.

A justice system burdened by triage risks unreliability – denying all people who rely on it – victims, witnesses, defendants, and their families and communities – efficient, equal, and accurate justice."

Disparities in Funding Persist

- ***Our budget is 60% of the DA's***
- ***Our budget is 2175% less than law enforcement's(DA, Sheriff, and Police)***



SAN FRANCISCO
PUBLIC DEFENDER
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Thank you for supporting Public Defenders, our clients, and their families and communities!

Accept + Expend to Bolster Deportation Defense

- Access to immigration lawyers is critical. **Immigrants who are represented in deportation proceedings are *five times* more likely to win their case than those who are unrepresented.**
- We applied for and secured funding for **three 8177 attorney positions and one 8173 paralegal position** from a foundation based in San Francisco, specifically for our Immigration Unit to meet the increasing need for immigration defense.