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## **PRESS RELEASE**

May 27, 2020

The North Carolina Commission on Indigent Defense Services has appointed Mary Pollard as the new Executive Director of the Office of Indigent Defense Services for North Carolina. The Office of Indigent Defense Services provides court appointed representation to individuals who could not otherwise afford to hire an attorney in criminal cases and certain types of civil cases. The agency's goals are to recruit the best and brightest North Carolina attorneys to represent indigent defendants; to ensure that every attorney representing indigent defendants has the qualifications, training, support, resources, and consultation services they need to be effective advocates; to create a system that will eliminate the recognized problems and conflicts caused by judges appointing and compensating defense attorneys; and to manage the state's indigent defense fund in an efficient and equitable manner.

Pollard's legal career spans 27 years, most of which she spent working to protect the rights of indigent, incarcerated people. A Raleigh resident and mother of two, Pollard is a graduate of the Wake Forest University School of Law. From 1993 through 2002, she practiced civil litigation with the firm of Womble Carlyle Sandridge & Rice, working on cases that ranged from simple contract disputes to complex patent litigation and products liability matters. On receiving the news of her appointment, Pollard said, "I am excited for the opportunity to work with the Commission to help ensure that no person facing criminal charges in our state is disadvantaged in court simply because they are poor."

While at Womble Carlyle, she was appointed to represent a defendant in capital post-conviction proceedings. Pollard's experience with that capital case resulted in her becoming aware of the significant hurdles that face indigent defendants in our courts and her advocacy in that case was instrumental in advancing discovery reform in North Carolina leading to our present statutes allowing for open file discovery. In 2002, she joined the Center for Death Penalty Litigation. There, she served as a staff attorney representing defendants in capital pre-trial and post-conviction proceedings, and consulted with attorneys handling capital litigation statewide.

Since 2009, Pollard has served as Executive Director of North Carolina Prisoner Legal Services, Inc., which contracts with the North Carolina Office of Indigent Defense Services to provide inmates incarcerated in the North Carolina Department of Corrections with their constitutional right of meaningful access to the courts. She represents incarcerated people in both post-conviction proceedings and in civil litigation involving unconstitutional conditions of confinement. Pollard, who is expected to begin her new role in August, will be replacing Thomas Maher, who had been the Executive Director for the past 11 years.



*Safeguarding individual liberty and the Constitution by equipping the North Carolina public defense community with the resources it needs to achieve fair and just outcomes for clients.*