



May 19, 2021

Contact Derwyn Bunton
NAPD Steering Committee Chair
dbunton@opdla.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – The National Association for Public Defense (NAPD) is thrilled to announce that its new Executive Director is Lori James-Townes. Lori is a Licensed Clinical Social Worker with a Master’s in Social Work. She has spent the vast majority of her career directly working with clients and supporting public defense teams to deliver exceptional advocacy. She is a professor, well-versed in the operations of boards and commissions, a lifetime trainer, a coach, a mentor to many, and a valuable contributor to the many community groups and projects that she supports.

NAPD Steering Committee Chair Derwyn Bunton, Chief District Defender for the Orleans Public Defenders, said this: “The best thing about Lori is her track record of helping other people achieve their best. As a member-led association that is driven by the engagement of passionate and diverse professionals – diverse across systems, office cultures, generations and professions – there is no better leader to equip our members with what they need in order to make changes that benefit their clients and offices and elevate the national public defense reform movement. On behalf of our Steering Committee, we are extremely enthusiastic about the vision and leadership that Lori will bring to NAPD.”

At NAPD, Lori has been a speaker for more live/in person conferences than anyone else. She led the creation and planning of NAPD’s Women’s Conference, which shifted (due to COVID-19) from a 200 person live event to a 800 person virtual event headlined by Stacey Abrams. In 2021, she co-led NAPD’s first ever National Virtual Conference for Gideon Week – bringing more than 6,500 attendees together for the largest public defense training in history. She continues to support NAPD’s Wellness Work and teaches a number of small-group intensive online courses, while also nurturing NAPD’s Social Worker members – many of whom work as the only social workers in their office – through listservs and meetups.

Jeff Sherr, NAPD Training Director, said this: “I’m thrilled to see Lori become NAPD’s next Executive Director. In addition to being a leader in the development of the use of mitigation specialists in capital cases, Lori is an outstanding trainer with world-class leadership skills. Lori is the perfect person to build on the successes of our previous

ED, Ernie Lewis, bringing her vast knowledge for the work of public defense professionals of all job titles and experiences to the position.”

Lori assumes this leadership position after three years of working as Assistant Training Director for NAPD and more than 25 years of working on defense teams representing indigent defendants. From 2010-2017 she worked for the Maryland Office of the Public Defender as their Director Social Work, Leadership and Program Development. In this position she was the first Director of Leadership in a public defender office in the country and revamped the statewide social work program to provide quality forensic and clinical social work support to the adult, juvenile, and appellate defense teams for the state’s 800 lawyers. Lori is the President & CEO of Expand Now, a coaching and consulting company that supports personal and professional growth and development. She is an adjunct clinical instructor at Towson University, Department of Family Studies and Community Development, supporting the emerging generation of social justice leaders. Lori maintains an active role developing and sustaining the National Association of Sentencing Advocates and Mitigation Specialists (NASAMS) and is a founding Board Member of the Black Public Defender’s Association (BPDA) and is active on many community boards. She regularly serves as a faculty member for national and regional leadership development, trials skills, training and programs, including but not limited to: NASAMS Gideon’s Promise, National Legal Aid and Defender Association, Administrative Offices of the Courts (Training Branch), MD Department of Human Services, and other private and non-profit entities. She has received numerous national recognition for specific and lifetime achievements.

NAPD is a national association of more than 25,000 public defender lawyers, social workers, investigators, and administrative staff. The membership includes 26 statewide organizational systems, more than 100 county-administered programs, and more than 1000 individual members across all 50 states, three US Territories and dozens of federal systems. NAPD was formed in late 2013; Lori is its second Executive Director



ON BEHALF OF THE NAPD STEERING COMMITTEE

DERWYN BUNTON, CHAIR

District Defender, Orleans Public Defenders,
New Orleans, LA

CARLOS J. MARTINEZ, VICE-CHAIR

Public Defender, Miami-Dade Public Defender,
Miami, FL

ANTHONY J. BENNEDETTI

Chief Counsel, Committee for Public Counsel
Services, Boston, MA

NANCY BENNETT

(Retired) Deputy Chief Counsel for the Private
Counsel Division of CPCS, Boston, MA

KEIR BRADFORD-GREY

Chief Defender, Philadelphia Defender's
Association, Philadelphia, PA

DEEPAK BUDWANI

Chief Financial and Administrative Officer, County of
Santa Barbara Public Defender,
Santa Barbara, CA

GEOFF BURKHART

Executive Director, Texas Indigent Defense
Commission, Austin, TX

AMY P. CAMPANELLI

Chief Defender, Cook County Office of the Public
Defender, Chicago, IL

PAUL B. DEWOLFE

State Public Defender, Office of the Public
Defender, Baltimore, MD

HERBERT DUZANT

Investigator, Federal Defender, District of
Nevada, Las Vegas, NV

EMILY HUGHES

Professor, University of Iowa College of Law,
Iowa City, IA

MARTESHA L. JOHNSON

Chief Defender, Metropolitan Public Defender,
Nashville, TN

JUSTINE M. LUONGO

Attorney-in Charge of the Criminal
Practice, Legal Aid Society of New York,
New York, NY

KATE MASON

Circuit Public Defender, Augusta Circuit,
Georgia Public Defender Council,
Augusta, GA

AISHA MCWEAY

Executive Director, Still She Rises,
Tulsa, OK

ED MONAHAN

(Retired) Public Advocate,
Department of Public Advocacy, Frankfort, KY

ELIZABETH MILLER

Assistant Director, Office of the Ohio
Public Defender, Columbus, OH

JUSTINE OLDERMAN

Executive Director, Bronx Defenders, Bronx, NY

CHANTÁ PARKER

Managing Director, Neighborhood Defender
Service of Detroit, Detroit, MI

CHRIS RAPILLO

State Public Defender, Connecticut Division
of Public Defender Services, Hartford, CT

MANOHAR RAJU

Public Defender, San Francisco Public Defender's
Office, San Francisco, CA

CYDNI SANCHEZ

Deputy Chief Public Defender
Law Offices of the New Mexico Public Defender
Albuquerque, NM

MARK STEPHENS

(Retired) District Defender, Knox County
Public Defender's Community Law Office,
Knoxville, TN

STEPHANNE C. THORNTON, LICSW

Criminal Justice Specialist,
Public Defender Services,
Charleston, WV

DOUG WILSON

City Public Defender, Aurora City
Municipal Public Defender,
Aurora, CO

BRENDON WOODS

Chief Public Defender, Alameda County
Public Defender, Oakland, CA

TIM YOUNG

Director, Office of the Ohio Public Defender,
Columbus, OH

LORINDA MEIER YOUNGCOURT

Trial Attorney, Federal Defender,
District of Eastern Washington & Idaho,
Spokane, WA