

A bill for an act

relating to public defenders; modifying provisions providing for representation by a public defender; amending Minnesota Statutes 2010, sections 609.131, subdivision 1; 611.17; 611.20, subdivision 4; proposing coding for new law in Minnesota Statutes, chapter 611; repealing Minnesota Statutes 2010, section 611.20, subdivision 6.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MINNESOTA:

Section 1. Minnesota Statutes 2010, section 609.131, subdivision 1, is amended to read:

Subdivision 1. **General rule.** Except as provided in subdivision 2, an alleged misdemeanor violation must be treated as a petty misdemeanor if the prosecuting attorney believes that it is in the interest of justice that the defendant not be imprisoned if convicted and certifies that belief to the court at or before the time of arraignment or pretrial hearing, and the court approves of the certification motion. Prior to the appointment of a public defender to represent a defendant charged with a misdemeanor, the court shall inquire of the prosecutor whether the prosecutor intends to certify the case as a petty misdemeanor. The defendant's consent to the certification is not required. When an offense is certified as a petty misdemeanor under this section, ~~the defendant's eligibility for court-appointed counsel must be evaluated as though the offense were a misdemeanor~~ defendant is not eligible for the appointment of a public defender.

Sec. 2. **[611.145] MISDEMEANORS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR INCARCERATION; CERTIFICATION; NONELIGIBILITY FOR PUBLIC DEFENDER.**

(a) If a prosecuting attorney believes that it is in the interest of justice that a defendant accused of committing a misdemeanor not be incarcerated if convicted and

certifies this belief to the court and the court approves of this certification, the defendant, if subsequently convicted of the misdemeanor offense, may not be incarcerated for it.

(b) If a misdemeanor is certified as a petty misdemeanor under section 609.131 or the certification described in paragraph (a) has occurred, the defendant is not eligible for the appointment of a public defender.

Sec. 3. Minnesota Statutes 2010, section 611.17, is amended to read:

**611.17 FINANCIAL INQUIRY; STATEMENTS; CO-PAYMENT;
STANDARDS FOR DISTRICT PUBLIC DEFENSE ELIGIBILITY.**

(a) Each judicial district must screen requests for representation by the district public defender. A defendant is financially unable to obtain counsel if:

~~(1) the defendant, or any dependent of the defendant who resides in the same household as the defendant, receives means-tested governmental benefits; or is charged with a misdemeanor and has an annual household income not greater than 125 percent of the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the United States Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of United States Code, title 42, section 9902(2);~~

(2) the defendant is charged with a gross misdemeanor and has an annual household income not greater than 150 percent of the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the United States Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of United States Code, title 42, section 9902(2);

(3) the defendant is charged with a felony and has an annual household income not greater than 175 percent of the poverty guidelines updated periodically in the Federal Register by the United States Department of Health and Human Services under the authority of United States Code, title 42, section 9902(2); or

~~(2) (4) the court determines that~~ the defendant, through any combination of liquid assets and current income, would be unable to pay the reasonable costs charged by private counsel in that judicial district for a defense of the same matter.

(b) Upon a request for the appointment of counsel, the court shall make an appropriate inquiry into the determination of financial circumstances eligibility under paragraph (a) of the applicant, who shall submit a financial statement under oath or affirmation setting forth the applicant's assets and liabilities, including the value of any real property owned by the applicant, whether homestead or otherwise, less the amount of any encumbrances on the real property, the source or sources of income, and any other information required by the court. The applicant shall be under a continuing duty while represented by a public defender to disclose any changes in the applicant's financial

circumstances ~~that might be relevant to the applicant's eligibility for a public defender.~~

The state public defender shall furnish appropriate forms for the financial statements,
which must be used by the district courts throughout the state. The forms must contain
conspicuous notice of the applicant's continuing duty to disclose to the court changes in the
applicant's financial circumstances. The forms must also contain conspicuous notice of the
applicant's obligation to make a co-payment for the services of the district public defender,
as specified under paragraph (c). The information contained in the statement shall be
confidential and for the exclusive use of the court and the public defender ~~appointed by~~
~~the court to represent the applicant~~ except for any prosecution under section 609.48. A
refusal to execute the financial statement or produce financial records constitutes a waiver
of the right to the appointment of a public defender. The court shall not appoint a ~~district~~
public defender to a defendant who is financially able to retain private counsel but refuses
to do so, refuses to execute the financial statement or refuses to provide information
necessary to determine financial eligibility under this section, or waives appointment of
a public defender under section 611.19.

An inquiry to determine financial eligibility of a defendant for the appointment of
the district public defender shall be made whenever possible prior to the court appearance
and by such persons as the court may direct. This inquiry may be combined with the
prerelease investigation provided for in Minnesota Rule of Criminal Procedure 6.02,
subdivision 3. In no case shall the district public defender be required to perform this
inquiry or investigate the defendant's assets or eligibility. The court has the sole duty to
conduct a financial inquiry. The inquiry must include the following:

(1) the liquidity of real estate assets, including the defendant's homestead;
(2) any assets that can be readily converted to cash or used to secure a debt;
(3) the determination of whether the transfer of an asset is voidable as a fraudulent
conveyance; and

(4) the value of all property transfers occurring on or after the date of the alleged
offense. The burden is on the accused to show that the accused is financially unable
to afford counsel. Defendants who fail to provide information necessary to determine
eligibility shall be deemed ineligible. The court must not appoint the district public
defender as advisory counsel.

(c) Upon disposition of the case, an individual who has received public defender
services shall pay to the court a \$75 co-payment for representation provided by a public
defender, unless the co-payment is, or has been, reduced in part or waived by the court.

The co-payment must be credited to the general fund. If a term of probation is
imposed as a part of an offender's sentence, the co-payment required by this section must

not be made a condition of probation. The co-payment required by this section is a civil obligation and must not be made a condition of a criminal sentence.

Sec. 4. Minnesota Statutes 2010, section 611.20, subdivision 4, is amended to read:

Subd. 4. **Employed defendants; ability to pay.** (a) A court shall order a defendant who is employed when a public defender is appointed, or who becomes employed while represented by a public defender, or who is or becomes able to make partial or full payment for counsel, to reimburse the state for the cost of the public defender. If reimbursement is required under this subdivision, the court shall order the reimbursement when a public defender is first appointed or as soon as possible after the court determines that reimbursement is required. The court may accept partial reimbursement from the defendant if the defendant's financial circumstances warrant a reduced reimbursement schedule. ~~The court may consider the guidelines in subdivision 6 in determining a defendant's reimbursement schedule.~~ If a defendant does not agree to make payments, the court may order the defendant's employer to withhold a percentage of the defendant's income to be turned over to the court. ~~The percentage to be withheld may be determined under subdivision 6~~ In determining the percentage to be withheld, the court shall consider the income and assets of the defendant based on the financial statement provided by the defendant when applying for the public defender under section 611.17.

(b) If a court determines under section 611.17 that a defendant is financially unable to pay the reasonable costs charged by private counsel due to the cost of a private retainer fee, the court shall evaluate the defendant's ability to make partial payments or reimbursement.

Sec. 5. **REPEALER.**

Minnesota Statutes 2010, section 611.20, subdivision 6, is repealed.

611.20 SUBSEQUENT ABILITY TO PAY COUNSEL.

Subd. 6. **Reimbursement schedule guidelines.** In determining a defendant's reimbursement schedule, the court may derive a specific dollar amount per month by multiplying the defendant's net income by the percent indicated by the following guidelines:

Net Income Per Month of Defendant	Number of Dependents Not Including Defendant				
	4 or more	3	2	1	0
\$200 and below	Percentage based on the ability of the defendant to pay as determined by the court				
\$200 - 350	8%	9.5%	11%	12.5%	14%
\$351 - 500	9%	11%	12.5%	14%	15%
\$501 - 650	10%	12%	14%	15%	17%
\$651 - 800	11%	13.5%	15.5%	17%	19%
\$801 and above	12%	14.5%	17%	19%	20%