



NEWS FROM THE OFFICE OF
ULSTER COUNTY COMPTROLLER
ELLIOTT AUERBACH

ELLIOTT AUERBACH
COUNTY COMPTROLLER
244 FAIR STREET
KINGSTON, NEW YORK 12401

PHONE: (845) 340-3529
countycomptroller@co.ulster.ny.us
www.youreyesonulster.com

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PUBLIC DEFENDER MONIES UNTAPPED

Idle Grant Funds Could Strengthen Legal Representation

Kingston, NY (February 4, 2019) – The Office of the Ulster County Comptroller has reviewed and audited the administration of two grants awarded to the Public Defender, representing available funding of up to \$900,000. The Comptroller has determined the awards were underutilized and that stronger oversight and monitoring could have maximized indigent legal representation and assisted with caseload reductions for the Public Defender’s Office.

“In the spirit of cooperation, we helped the Public Defender complete paperwork owed to the State after we recognized the struggle the Office was having,” said Comptroller Auerbach.

The audit’s objectives were to determine the status of Counsel at First Appearance (“CAFA”) and Upstate Quality Improvement and Caseload Reduction Grant awards for \$604,776 and \$292,859, respectively. The audit examined the following:

- Policies, procedures, and terms governing the grants
- Eligibility of any incurred expenses and payments
- Adherence to reporting requirements
- General implementation of initiatives

Along with the findings, the Comptroller’s Office provided related recommendations and suggested strengthening administration and inter-departmental collaboration for future grants.

“I value the hard work that the Public Defender’s Office does and realize that its legion of attorneys is dedicated to providing legal representation for clients who, in most cases, cannot afford a lawyer,” said the Comptroller. “It would be in the Office’s best interest to fill its grants specialist position as soon as possible so that an in-house administrator is tasked with managing all aspects of current and future awards, allowing the legal professionals to do what they do best – offer counsel to the underserved.”

The audit can be found on the Comptroller’s website: www.youreyesonulster.com