

# NEWS FROM THE ULSTER COUNTY OFFICE OF THE COMPTROLLER

March S. Gallagher, Esq.  
Comptroller



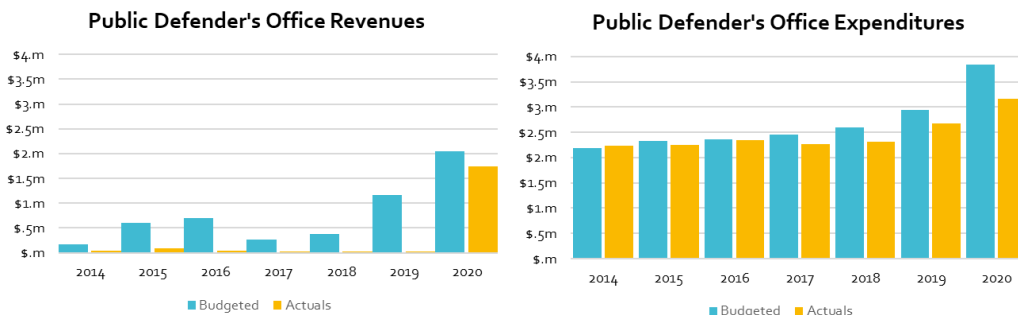
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For release: Immediately

## ULSTER COUNTY COMPTROLLER RELEASES PUBLIC DEFENDER'S OFFICE FOLLOW-UP AUDIT

(Kingston, NY) Ulster County Comptroller March Gallagher today released a follow up audit report on the Ulster County Public Defender's Office. The Public Defender's primary function is to provide indigent legal services to defendants appearing in criminal and family court. The Comptroller's audit comes as a follow up to a previous audit published in 2019, that reported deficiencies in grants management by the Public Defender's Office.

"Our follow up audit found that while the Public Defender's Office has made significant improvements in grants management, there are still opportunities for the County to increase its effectiveness in acquiring these grant resources," Gallagher explained. "Additionally, The Budget Division of the Finance Department should not budget grant revenues without budgeting the necessary expenditures to achieve those revenues."



Other highlights in the report include:

- Ulster County has forgone \$1.4 million in grant revenues that cannot be recouped in reimbursements, primarily because those funds were not spent.
- Ulster County was able to recoup \$1.75 million in grant funds that had not been previously reimbursed.
- The Ulster County Public Defender's Office made personnel budget requests in 2016-2019 that were not included in the Executive's budgets under the previous Administration.

- Ulster County Public Defender’s Office caseloads consistently exceed statewide averages.
- Caseloads have improved both from increased staffing and from reduction in cases, increasing time spent per case from 4.81 hours per case in 2017 to 7.22 hours per case in 2019.

Funding for indigent legal services has seen unprecedented growth under the Hurrell-Harring Settlement decision which will bring \$9.98 million in funding to Ulster County through 2023.

“With a large increase in funding for indigent legal services, ensuring proper grants management and administration is critical both to save taxpayer resources and provide the level of service that the people of Ulster County deserve,” Gallagher continued. “Great strides have been made to recoup outstanding funds and better align budgeted revenues and budgeted expenditures to ensure future recoupment of grant reimbursements.”

The full audit can be seen here: <https://comptroller.ulstercountyny.gov/audit-reports/public-defender’s-office-follow-audit>

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