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Public Defender Fights to Protect Clients’ Rights During Strike

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OAKLAND, CA – The Alameda County Public Defender’s Office filed two petitions for emergency relief yesterday with the Court of Appeal, demanding that the Alameda County Superior Court comply with the law requiring an official court reporter in felony court proceedings. The unlawful denial of a defendant’s request for a court reporter violates state law and the Constitution which guarantee an indigent person the right to an official court reporter in felony cases.

The Alameda County Public Defenders’ Office fully supports the workers’ demands for fair wages and working conditions but cannot ignore the risk to the constitutionally guaranteed right to a complete record of court proceedings. The petition filed yesterday asks the Court to honor its legal obligations and provide an official reporter – rather than relying on electronic recordings that risk inaccuracies.

“We stand in solidarity with the courtroom clerks and court reporters---they are the backbone of our legal system and need to be paid fairly and well trained. However, we also believe that no one should face felony proceedings without the safeguards provided by a qualified court reporter,” said Public Defender Brendon Woods. *“Under California Law, an indigent person is entitled to an official transcript in felony matters. We filed this writ to ensure that fundamental rights – such as due process and equal protection – don’t become casualties of a labor dispute. This isn’t just about one case, it’s about ensuring that every person who steps foot in a felony courtroom – no matter their income – has the same opportunity for a fair hearing, a reliable transcript, and the means to appeal if necessary. We will continue to take every legal step available to protect those rights.”*

For more information or to obtain a copy of the writ, contact:

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