



DANE COUNTY

Joe Parisi
County Executive

October 30, 2017

Ismael Ozanne
District Attorney
Dane County District Attorney's Office
215 S. Hamilton St #3000
Madison, WI 53703

Dear District Attorney Ozanne:

I'm writing to express my extreme disappointment and concern with your media announcement last week that I fear both misled and unnecessarily scared the public.

We have had a number of meetings during your time as District Attorney about our shared concern for the state's commitment to hiring more prosecutors. But make no mistake, prosecutors are state employees. The State of Wisconsin tells you how many prosecutors you can hire and provides a budget for how much you pay them. Suggesting as you did last week that somehow county government has denied your office resources that have always been funded and administered by the state is misleading.

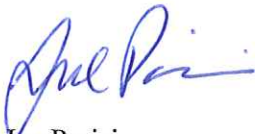
Just a few weeks ago, the State of Wisconsin after many months of hearings and deliberation, passed its budget for the next two years. If the genuine objective of your media announcement last week was to encourage state leaders to support prosecutorial needs, it's puzzling why such a press conference didn't occur at any point during the spring and summer months lawmakers were considering state spending priorities. Calling attention to an issue of this importance *after* lawmakers have already passed their budget is entirely ineffective. Combined with the renewed doubts and fears such a public announcement will have on victims and their potential willingness to come forward to report future criminal offenses, I question both the timing and inciting language of your announcement.

Attached is a memo from the Wisconsin Association of State Prosecutors, of which I assume you are a member that was sent to all members of the state legislature back in April. This communication advocates for a proposal in Governor Walker's budget to increase wages for existing prosecutors in each of the next two years by a total of over \$3.6 million. This memo, presumably intended to educate lawmakers on the budget priorities of district attorneys, is silent on lobbying for additional prosecutors. Pay progression is certainly important to retain experienced talent but if a letter is being sent directly to lawmakers during the budget why isn't the issue of staffing levels even raised? For example, if a new prosecutor position costs let's say \$85,000, the new money put into the state budget could have also created 42 new assistant district attorney positions. Again, the silence on this point is perplexing.

I am well aware that similar to most any public, private, or nonprofit entity, needs far outweigh available resources on a regular basis. **That's why county government has increased funding to the Dane County District Attorney's Office over 40% in my few years as County Executive.** Those dollars funded nearly nine new professional positions in your office to assist with support, paralegal, administrative, and diversion efforts all intended to reduce workloads on your assistant district attorneys. I can assure you very few county departments – if any – have seen county support increase 40% in just a few years. Dane County has done more than our share toward addressing this matter. I hope that moving forward you will focus your efforts at those responsible for funding assistant district attorney positions who have not held up their end of the bargain – the Governor and state legislature.

If district attorneys wish to make adding new prosecutors a priority in the next state budget, I will enthusiastically lend my voice to that effort.

Sincerely,



Joe Parisi
Dane County Executive

Cc: Dane County Board of Supervisors
Sheriff Dave Mahoney
Dane County Chief of Police Association
Dane County Commission on Sensitive Crimes