

Dear Colleagues:

I graduated from the North Carolina Central University School of Law in 2003. I launched my legal career at a small law firm where my work provided exposure to a broad range of practice areas: criminal law, personal injury litigation, family law, domestic violence, estate planning, and commercial real estate. In private practice, I began developing and teaching criminal continuing legal education courses with Law People, LLC (formerly Law to the People). During my seven years in private practice, I appeared in courts in twenty counties across North Carolina.

In 2014, I accepted a position with the Durham County Public Defender's Office as an Assistant Public Defender, where I handle a felony case load, up to and including First Degree Murder. I take pride in consistent ethical, competent, and zealous representation of my clients and a willingness to not only take cases to trial, but to also craft effective trial strategies. Additionally, my exposure to the inner workings of the Public Defender's Office has broadened during my time there. Over the past five years, I have had the opportunity to learn from, mentor, and collaborate with some of the sharpest legal minds in the state.

With the departure of The Honorable Lawrence Campbell as the Chief Public Defender, it is imperative that the next leader is experienced in the practices that have made the office effective and open minded to the new vector of criminal defense in our jurisdiction. Under my leadership, whether you are an experienced criminal attorney or a Pro Se Defendant, anyone should feel empowered to ask for and receive assistance from members of the Public Defender's Office. If there is an issue or confusion in a criminal courtroom, an Assistant Public Defender should be called upon to help resolve it. When a new attorney in our jurisdiction appears to handle a matter, they should feel comfortable asking an Assistant Public Defender for guidance. I will make it a priority to **establish a collaborative relationship between all practicing attorneys in our criminal courtrooms and the Public Defender's Office.**

Durham County criminal policies and procedures have been at the forefront of local, state, and national news since I began practicing in 2006. Issues and possible resolutions involving Durham County criminal courts are discussed by many legal actors. **It is imperative that the Durham County Public Defender's Office take an active role in these discussions.** If appointed, I will ensure that the Public Defender's Office is a leader and a voice for all attorneys who sit on the defense side of the well.

The effective and collaborative practice of criminal law can be practiced by all in Durham, aided by the vast expertise and resources of the Public Defender's Office. I am asking for the opportunity to lead the Public Defender's Office. Together, we can ensure Durham County stays at the epicenter of fair, effective, and zealous criminal representation in North Carolina. I humbly ask for your support on this journey.

Sincerely,

Idrissa A. Smith