



Patrick Morrissey
Office of the Governor

April 30, 2025

VIA HAND DELIVERY

The Honorable Kris Warner
Secretary of State
State Capitol Complex
Building 1, Suite 157-K
Charleston, West Virginia 25305

RE: Enrolled Committee Substitute House Bill 2351

Secretary Warner:

Pursuant to Section Fourteen, Article VII of the Constitution of the State of West Virginia, I hereby disapprove and return Enrolled Committee Substitute House Bill 2351. This bill increases the hourly compensation rate for panel attorneys from \$60 to \$70 for out-of-court work, and from \$80 to \$90 for in-court work. 87th Leg. Sess. H.B. 2351, p. 4 (Apr. 12, 2025).

I am sympathetic to the intent of this bill, and am open to increasing the hourly compensation rate for our panel attorneys. Yet, this bill creates a shortfall in appropriations, without any identified offsets. I want West Virginia to be a national model for fiscal responsibility, and this bill fails to meet that objective. While the Public Defender Services submitted a fiscal note which indicated that this bill would increase their budget by approximately \$5 million, the Legislature reduced appropriations for the Public Defender Services by approximately \$16 million from my proposed budget. 87th Leg. Sess. H.B. 2026 Intro., p. 25; 87 Leg. Sess. H.B. 2026, p. 26 (Apr. 11, 2025). The math does not add up. The Legislature did not fully fund this line item for the ensuing fiscal year, which necessitates the veto of this bill.

Accordingly, I encourage the Legislature to revisit this issue and to work with me to ensure a proper bill and budget to fully fund an increase in compensation for panel attorneys and other programs under the Public Defender Service budget.

Accordingly, I hereby disapprove and return Enrolled Committee Substitute House Bill 2351.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick Morrisey", written in a cursive style.

Patrick Morrisey
Governor

cc: The Honorable Randy Smith
President of the Senate

Roger Hanshaw
Speaker of the House of Delegates