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Michigan Supreme Court Decision in *People of the State of Michigan v. Donell Willie-Terrell Ivey* Marks Victory for Indigent Defense

LANSING, Mich. — The State Appellate Defender Office (SADO) issued the following statement following the Michigan Supreme Court’s decision in *People of the State of Michigan v. Donell Willie-Terrell Ivey*, a case addressing whether courts may impose attorney fees on people who were appointed counsel because they could not afford one.

“The Michigan Supreme Court’s decision in *People of the State of Michigan v. Donell Willie-Terrell Ivey* represents an important step toward protecting the constitutional right to counsel in Michigan. The Court’s ruling reinforces the principle that people should not face financial penalties simply because they exercised their right to a court-appointed attorney.”

“Michigan’s Constitution guarantees the right to counsel for anyone charged with a crime, regardless of their financial circumstances. SADO argued that requiring indigent individuals to pay attorney fees raises serious constitutional concerns and can create long-term financial burdens for those already struggling to make ends meet.

“These fees are problematic for people across Michigan. Too often, individuals who were appointed counsel because they could not afford one are later ordered to repay thousands of dollars in attorney fees, creating debt that can follow them for years.

“SADO remains committed to protecting the constitutional rights of people who cannot afford an attorney and to ensuring that Michigan’s system of indigent defense is fair, equitable, and consistent with the law,” the office said.

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