



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

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11th Floor, 160 North Main, Memphis, Tennessee 38103

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**SHELBY COUNTY MAYOR LEE HARRIS ANNOUNCES NOMINEE FOR CHIEF
PUBLIC DEFENDER, PHYLLIS ALUKO**

From volunteer to chief, Aluko is set to become the 11th Public Defender and first black female to serve in the role.



Memphis, TN - Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris announced today the nomination of Phyllis Aluko to serve as the next Chief Public Defender. The selection was made after a thorough search and interview process led by the Mayor's Transition Team Co-Chair, Paul Morris. If approved by the Shelby County Board of Commissioners, Aluko will become the first black female to serve in this role.

"The Law Office of the Shelby County Public Defender has a long legacy of standing up for vulnerable residents in Memphis and Shelby County," said Paul Morris. "I worked with the Mayor to identify someone who is ethical, hard-working, and respected by their peers and community. Ms. Aluko is dedicated to Shelby County and will be an exceptional leader of the Public Defender's Office."

Aluko started as a volunteer in the Shelby County Public Defender's Office before working in the trial division for ten years. She progressed through the ranks to serve as a Division Leader in the trial division. She then transferred to the appellate division and became the first woman and first African-American to serve as a Supervisor of the appellate team.

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“For over 25 years, I have dedicated my career to protecting the rights of indigent people who have been charged with committing a criminal offense,” stated Phyllis Aluko. “I care about improving our indigent defense system and I am grateful for the opportunity to serve residents of Shelby County as the new Public Defender.”

Phyllis Aluko graduated from Whitehaven High School before earning her Bachelor of Arts from the University of Pennsylvania. She went on to earn her Juris Doctor from the University of Pittsburgh School of Law in 1992. She is on the Board of Directors for the Memphis Bar Foundation, which is the charitable arm of the Memphis Bar Association. She is also a member the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and the Ben F. Jones Chapter of the National Bar Association, where she earned the President’s Award in 2008 and 2016. Aluko is a 2016 graduate of the Leadership Memphis FastTrack program.

The Law Office of the Shelby County Public Defender is the third oldest public defender system in the country. The office represents more than 25,000 adults and children each year at every level of the justice system, from general sessions court to the United States Supreme Court.

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