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Gideon's Promise Founder, Jonathan Rapping, Embarks on Partnership with the State of Maryland to Improve Indigent Defense

ATLANTA (May 20, 2014) – Gideon's Promise founder Jonathan Rapping begins a new partnership this week with the Maryland Office of the Public Defender (OPD). The partnership will help OPD improve the quality of representation in its state. To facilitate this partnership, Rapping will take a leave of absence as the director of the Honors Program in Criminal Justice at Atlanta's John Marshall Law School, so he may work intensively with Maryland OPD to incorporate the Gideon's Promise model across the state.

Gideon's Promise, based in Atlanta, yet armed with a national reputation, works with public defender leaders and trainers across the country to build client-centered organizations focused on overcoming systemic obstacles to ensure the most vulnerable among us receive the kind of representation our Constitution demands. Being asked to model this program in Maryland is truly the next step for both the organization, and for Rapping.

Fifty-one years ago, in *Gideon v. Wainwright*, the Supreme Court said the lawyer serves as the vehicle within our justice system to ensure all other rights are realized – and that there can be no equal justice until poor people are guaranteed the same kind of lawyer as those with the means would pay for them. Today, we are still not close to fulfilling this promise. Systems across the country have come to accept an embarrassingly low standard of justice for the poor. Gideon's Promise is building a movement of public defenders to advocate for equal justice and to push broken systems to live up to the ideals set forth in that landmark case.

Rapping will work with Maryland OPD to direct strategic planning and organizational development as it continues its great work trying to ensure justice is a reality in courtrooms across that state.

Paul DeWolfe, the Public Defender for Maryland, invited Rapping to work with his organization after spending a couple of years working with Gideon's Promise through its Leadership Program.

"Paul DeWolfe has been a wonderful contributor to our efforts to build a community of public defender leaders to develop solutions to very difficult challenges facing public defenders in under-resourced areas," Rapping says. "Implementing the Gideon's Promise model into a statewide indigent defense system serves as evidence that well-respected leaders across the country recognize the incredible value Gideon's Promise brings to the national discussion about how to make Gideon's promise a reality. I am thankful to Paul for partnering with us and to Atlanta's John Marshall Law School for giving me a leave of absence to engage in this important work so consistent with its mission."

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"The Office of the Public Defender, Maryland is pleased to be partnering with Gideon's Promise and its president and founder, Jonathan Rapping," DeWolfe says. "This partnership is consistent with OPD's strategic plan and vision of bringing justice, fairness and dignity for all to the criminal justice system in the state of Maryland. Partnering with Gideon's Promise, and bringing Mr. Rapping to our leadership team as the director of strategic planning and organizational development, is consistent with our mutual goal of improving indigent defense in America. OPD attorneys and staff are thrilled to welcome Jonathan to our leadership team. We are honored to partner with Gideon's Promise, the national leader in indigent defense training and organizational development."

For more information about Gideon's Promise, please visit www.GideonsPromise.org, or contact (404) 935-6166.

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