

**LAW DEPARTMENT
FISCAL YEAR 2027 BUDGET TESTIMONY
APRIL 28, 2026**

INTRODUCTION

Good morning, Council President Johnson and Members of City Council. I am Renee Garcia, City Solicitor, joined today by First Deputy City Solicitor Meghan Goddard and members of my Executive Team. I am pleased to provide testimony on the Law Department’s Fiscal Year 2027 Operating Budget proposal.

DEPARTMENT MISSION & PLANS

Mission: The Law Department’s mission is to serve the residents of Philadelphia by providing excellent legal counsel as trustworthy partners to clients, no matter the challenges faced. The Law Department promotes an environment of camaraderie, accountability, and inclusiveness where staff can do their best work while achieving balance in their lives; and, above all, the Law Department is dedicated to bettering the City of Philadelphia for all residents. Integral to achieving the Department’s mission is the proud celebration of the rich diversity of staff, the City’s workforce, and the residents the City serves.

Plans for Fiscal Year 2027:

The Law Department has the esteemed honor of serving as counsel to the Mayor’s Administration, this Council, other elected officials, and boards and commissions. We strive to provide innovative legal strategy on behalf of our clients to better the lives of our neighbors here in Philadelphia. As passionate public servants, our team of over 400 attorneys and legal paraprofessionals is dedicated to pursuing equity and justice through our everyday work.

With every complex challenge, our team is working to provide exceptional legal services to minimize risk for the City while pursuing our collective vision for a Safer, Cleaner, Greener Philadelphia with access to economic opportunity for all. Relevant to this budget hearing, the work of the Law Department also preserves City funds while securing and collecting additional revenue through successful affirmative litigation, tax revenue, fines, and fees.

The following examples highlight a few of the major efforts the Law Department has been involved in FY26.

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Legal Counsel:

Whether there is an emergency, issue of citywide interest, or a challenge to City operations or legislation, the Law Department is called upon to provide legal counsel.

As all members know, no piece of legislation is a straight line or straightforward. Your offices have your ear to the ground at what real-world issues are impacting Philadelphia residents. Our job – in representing both the Mayor and City Council – is to take noble policy ambitions and fit them in a fragmented, piece-meal, and sometimes contradictory legal landscape. Our legal advice strives to achieve all of your policy objectives while also withstanding constitutional, preemption, and Charter restrictions that do not always align. The Mayor’s H.O.M.E. Initiative was one such example where we worked iteratively on numerous drafts of legislation related to the issuance of bond financing.

In the past year, the Law Department also supported City Council to advance complex legislation pertaining to sidewalk cafes, City workforce training, discrimination in housing and employment, youth services, animal cruelty and overbreeding, mobile medical services providers, curfews, retirement savings, nuisance businesses, and more.

Although those examples involve months of planning and deliberation, the Law Department is also called on for in-the-moment legal advice. A few weeks ago, the Law Department was immediately deployed to provide emergency counsel to heroic first responders and operating departments in the aftermath of the tragic garage collapse in Grays Ferry that claimed the lives of three people. Law was onsite to assist with real-time legal advice related to evidence preservation and emergency contracting, and drafted [Executive Order No. 03-26](#) to initiate an independent investigation of the incident, which is now underway.

Consumer Protection:

The Law Department has been instrumental in progressing the City’s consumer protection efforts. Since the implementation of the Consumer Protection Ordinance, introduced by this legislative body, the Law Department has championed efforts to protect Philadelphia consumers from scams and fraud perpetuated by bad actors. We have filed several lawsuits to hold companies accountable for fraudulent business practices and harms to Philadelphia consumers.

This year, we sued SC Johnson and Bimbo Bakeries for violating consumer protection laws by misleadingly advertising the recyclability of their products, leading to increased litter and disruptions to waste processing systems.

We also filed two separate lawsuits against several Pharmacy Benefit Managers – one alleging the companies had a significant role in creating and sustaining the opioid addiction crisis, and the other alleging the companies participated in a price fixing scheme to artificially inflate the price of insulin.

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Most recently, we sued Glock – a common gun manufacturer which the City alleges has contributed to the gun violence crisis in Philadelphia through their advertising tactics, which promote the use of illegal switches to convert handguns into automatic weapons.

We continue to litigate in these cases to obtain relief and to ensure that entities doing business in our city are following applicable laws.

Navigating Federal Changes and Challenges

With the transition to a new federal administration and an ever-shifting federal legal landscape, the Law Department has worked to meet the legal needs of the City in this moment. Law provides 24/7 monitoring of emerging funding issues, enforcement action, and case law developments with nuanced, collaborative, and creative legal advice, solutions, and action.

Attorneys across the department provided real-time advice to operational departments through changes to federal funding and grant criteria to minimize disruptions to essential programs and capital project progress. Notably, the Law Department was instrumental in establishing an emergency fund to support families impacted by cuts to the SNAP benefit program. Additionally, when the slavery panels were removed from the President's House exhibit, my department filed a complaint and an emergency injunction the same day. Although the matter is still under appeal, my team successfully had many exhibits restored, and the federal government is currently enjoined from further attempts to change the exhibit.

Gun Violence:

The Law Department continues to employ all available legal strategies to reduce the rate of gun violence and tackle the black market of illegal firearms. In addition to the suit against Glock, this year, the Law Department drafted the straw purchasing ordinance, now signed into law, requiring all licensed firearm dealers in Philadelphia to post clear warning signs that straw purchasing of guns is a crime. We also successfully defended the switch ordinance banning rate-of-fire acceleration devices leading to the dismissal of a lawsuit filed against the City.

Housing:

The Law Department plays a critical role in advancing the City's goals of creating and preserving affordable housing, as well as creating long-term opportunities for those in recovery from substance use disorder.

The Law Department was vitally involved in all aspects in the developments of the Riverview Wellness Village. Our units collaborated with City departments on issues related to real estate, infrastructure, HIPAA and privacy, constitutional matters, and contracting. We assisted the Office of Community Wellness and Recovery in negotiating professional services and best value contracts to ensure the residents of the Riverview Wellness Village receive comprehensive care, recovery support, medical and other services, including, but not limited to, food services, culinary arts training, career exploration, and skill development for residents.

The Code and Public Nuisance Litigation Unit also worked over many months to secure a zoning variance that would allow for the expansion of services at the Riverview Wellness Village through the erection of a new building with 82 multi-family dwelling units on the site.

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Commercial Law Unit attorneys supported the Office of Homeless Services, in partnership with numerous City agencies, in expanding the City's emergency shelter capacity by 1,000 beds. The Law Department's Commercial Law and Real Estate teams played a key role by negotiating leases, assisting with drafting notices, executing supporting contracts, offering guidance on licensing and zoning requirements, and preparing letters of support for shelter site locations.

These efforts are just a snapshot of the daily responsibilities and work of the Law Department. Our department touches every piece of legislation, every program and initiative, every transaction, every professional services contract. Our legal work ensures that we are able to deliver outstanding public service on behalf of the residents of Philadelphia.

This commitment to investing in Law's staff is crucial to our retention and our ability to attract and hire a diverse set of the best and brightest legal minds – which we need as we work together to solve some of the City's most complex challenges. As City Solicitor, I am requesting the following in the FY27 Budget as a necessary investment in our Law Department.

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PROPOSED BUDGET OVERVIEW & OTHER BUDGET DRIVERS

General Fund Financial Summary by Class						
	FY25 Original Appropriations	FY25 Actual Obligations	FY26 Original Appropriations	FY26 Estimated Obligations	FY27 Proposed Appropriations	Difference: FY27 Proposed-FY26 Estimated
Class 100 - Employee Compensation	\$19,884,049	\$21,171,665	\$22,302,432	\$22,634,186	\$22,983,668	\$349,482
Class 200 - Purchase of Services	\$9,633,145	\$13,974,798	\$14,193,145	\$14,193,145	\$14,693,145	\$500,000
Class 300/400 - Materials, Supplies & Equipment	\$184,676	\$182,747	\$184,676	\$184,676	\$184,676	\$0
Class 500 - Contributions	\$0	\$17,500	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
	\$29,701,870	\$35,346,710	\$36,680,253	\$37,012,007	\$37,861,489	\$849,482

Contracts Summary (Professional Services only)						
	FY23	FY24	FY25	FY26**	FY26 YTD (Q1 & Q2)	FY27 Projected
Total amount of contracts	\$9,345,749	\$13,416,609	\$15,380,715	\$6,351,450	\$4,121,450	\$13,629,625
Total amount to S/LBE	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Total amount to M/W/DSBE	\$7,067,449	\$10,165,258	\$11,611,000	\$2,390,000	\$2,390,000	
S/LBE Participation Rate	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
M/W/DSBE Participation Rate	76%	76%	75%	38%	58%	

*S/LBE not yet available as the City works to build the S/LBE registry and begin setting small and local business participation goals.

**FY26 projection is as of 4/21/26

Total S/LBE Contract Participation Goal (Public Works; Services, Supplies & Equipment; and Professional Services combined)			
	FY25	FY26	FY27 Projected
S/LBE Contract Participation Goal	N/A	N/A	N/A

*S/LBE not yet available as the City works to build the S/LBE registry and begin setting small and local business participation goals.

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Proposed Funding Request:

The proposed Fiscal Year 2027 General Fund budget totals \$37,861,489, an increase of \$849,482 over Fiscal Year 2026 estimated obligation levels. This increase is primarily due to an increase in Class 100 to support three additional staff in in the Corporate and Tax and Compliance Groups, as well as an increase in Class 200 to support professional services obligations.

The proposed budget includes:

- \$22,983,668 in Class 100, a \$349,482 increase over FY26 estimated obligations. This funding will add three additional positions in the Property Assessment, Boards & Commissions Unit, Right-To-Know Unit, and Tax Litigation and Collections Unit.
- \$14,693,145 in Class 200, a \$500,000 increase over FY26 estimated obligations. This funding will support the department's professional services obligations.
- \$184,676 in Class 300/400, level with FY26 estimated obligations. This funding will support the department's materials, supplies, and equipment obligations.

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STAFFING LEVELS

The department is requesting 317 budgeted positions for FY27, an increase of three (3) positions over FY26.

This increase is attributed to the addition of three positions in the Property Assessment, Boards & Commissions Unit, Right-To-Know Unit, and Tax Litigation and Collections Unit.

Employment Levels (as of November 2025)			
	FY26 Budgeted	Filled as of November 2025	FY27 Proposed
Number of Full-Time Positions	314	291	317
Number of Exempt Positions	297	276	300
Number of Executive Positions (deputy level and above)		10	
Average Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$98,026	
Median Salary of All Full-Time Positions		\$92,613	

NEW HIRES

New Hires (from 7/1/2025 to November 2025)		
	Total Number of New Hires	Spanish
Black or African American	12	
Asian	3	
Hispanic or Latino	1	1
White	17	
Other	1	
Total	34	1

The department has hired 16 new staff members since November 2025.

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VACANCY RATE AND ALLOWANCE

Vacancy Rate Summary (General Fund)						
	FY25 Actual Vacancy Rate	FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance	FY26 Vacancy Rate	FY26 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate	FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance	FY27 Budgeted Vacancy Allowance Rate
Departmental Total	0.0%	(\$1,079,525)	7.4%	4.5%	(\$806,374)	3.5%

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OTHER BUDGETARY IMPACTS

Federal and State (Where Applicable)

With the transition to a new federal administration and an ever-shifting federal legal landscape, the Law Department is providing 24/7 monitoring of emerging funding issues, enforcement action, and case law developments with nuanced, collaborative, and creative legal advice, solutions and action. Notably, attorneys across the department have worked closely with the Finance Department and Mayor's Office to provide real-time advice to operational departments through changes to federal funding and grant criteria to minimize disruptions to essential programs and capital project progress.

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CONTRACTING EXPERIENCE

M/W/DSBE Participation on Large Professional Services Contracts											
Top Five Largest Contracts, FY26											
Vendor Name	Service Provided	Dollar Amount of Contract	RFP Issue Date	Contract Start Date	Ranges in RFP	% of M/W/DSBE and SBE Participation Achieved	\$ Value of M/W/DSBE and SBE Participation	Total % Participation - All DSBEs	Total \$ Value Participation - All DSBEs	Local Business	Waiver for Living Wage Compliance?
Nathan & Kamionski LLP	Legal Services	\$1,900,000	10/17/2022	2/1/2026	MBE: 15-20%	0%	\$0	100%	\$1,900,000	No	No
					WBE: 10-15%	100%	\$1,900,000				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					S/LBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Ahmad Zaffarese LLC	Legal Services	\$800,000	10/17/2022	4/1/2026	MBE: 15-20%	50%	\$400,000	100%	\$800,000	Yes	No
					WBE: 10-15%	50%	\$400,000				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					S/LBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Archer & Greiner, P.C.	Legal Services	\$650,000	10/17/2022	1/1/2026	MBE: 15-20%	50%	\$325,000	100%	\$650,000	Yes	No
					WBE: 10-15%	50%	\$325,000				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					S/LBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Marshall Dennehey, P.C. - Civil Rights	Legal Services	\$600,000	10/17/2022	1/1/2026	MBE: 15-20%	50%	\$300,000	100%	\$600,000	Yes	No
					WBE: 10-15%	50%	\$300,000				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					S/LBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
Marshall Dennehey, P.C. - Labor & Employment	Legal Services	\$600,000	10/21/2022	12/31/2026	MBE: 15-20%	50%	\$300,000	100%	\$600,000	Yes	No
					WBE: 10-15%	50%	\$300,000				
					DSBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				
					S/LBE: BGFE	0%	\$0				

Non-Profit Vendor Demographics not applicable.

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PROGRAM BASED BUDGETING:

Program Name: Executive and Administrative Resources

Program Number: 06

FY27 Proposed General Fund: \$4,471,956

Program Description: The Executive and Administrative Resources program includes the Executive Management Team and the City Solicitor, whose responsibilities include the supervision of senior management; development and maintenance of departmental policies; and provision of legal guidance to the Mayor’s Administration, City Council, and all other City officials. This program also includes the Administrative Services Unit, the principal administrative and financial unit of the Law Department, and the Professional Development & Diversity Team.

FY27 Strategic Goals:

- **Driving Legal Innovation:** With the creation of the Chief Deputy of E-Discovery & Data Strategies position, the Law Department will apply a global mindset to further streamline legal processes and improve efficiency by adopting legal technology tools, automation, and data-driven decision-making, including the continued implementation of a case management platform. Taking a holistic approach, the Law Department will continue to assess the data input and output of all eighteen practice units to account for subject matter-specific practices, nuances, and needs, while ensuring universal standards.
- **Building Future Leaders:** As the legal landscape constantly evolves, so must the Department. The Law Department will grow its internship program, Fall Class recruiting, skill-based and leadership training, professional development opportunities, and succession planning models. The Law Department will continue to foster leaders by providing inclusive access to innovative learning opportunities and executive training programs that strengthen key leadership competencies, enhance decision-making skills, and promote strategic thinking while implementing succession planning as part of ongoing learning, training, preparation, and knowledge transfer.
- **Community Building:** The Law Department will enhance efforts to build a workplace community built on trust, inclusion, collaboration, and support by revitalizing existing structures – such as leadership meetings and supervisory check-ins – to be more than a means of information sharing, but an opportunity to learn, improve, and grow together to collectively solve problems and tackle unprecedented legal challenges. The Law Department will measure this goal by tracking participation, collaboration outcomes, retention data, and employee feedback to assess trust, inclusion, and growth.

FY27 Performance Measures: *The previous performance measure for this program – “Historically underrepresented partner participation in Law contracts” – has been retired due to the Office of Economic Opportunity’s (OEO) recent transition to a Small and Local Business Enterprise Program. A new performance measure will be added in the near future.*

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Program Name: Corporate and Tax

Program Number: 04

FY27 Proposed General Fund: \$7,887,604

Program Description: The Corporate and Tax program includes the following units: Commercial Law; Real Estate & Development; Property Assessment, Boards & Commissions; and Regulatory Law. Its responsibilities include negotiating technology-related services, telecommunications, and procurement contracts; drafting and providing guidance concerning municipal bond issues; drafting and negotiation for real estate transactions and economic development projects; representation in matters relating to highway, rail, and mass transportation; and providing advice and counsel to the City’s various departments, boards, commissions, and agencies, including City Council. This program also includes the Tax Litigation and Collections Unit, which handles tax litigation by initiating and prosecuting actions for the collection of delinquent taxes owed to the City, in close coordination with the Department of Revenue.

FY27 Strategic Goals:

- **Welcoming an International Audience:** The Law Department will deliver ongoing legal guidance and expertise to facilitate the seamless and thorough preparation for and successful execution of the FIFA World Cup and Semiquincentennial events.
- **Supporting Capital Development:** The Corporate & Tax Group units will work together to provide results-oriented legal guidance to the Administration and client departments on contracts, legislation, and related legal issues.
- **Contract Efficiency and Modernization:** The Corporate & Tax Group will take the lead on rendering innovative and creative legal solutions to the Administration on contract reform initiatives, Optimizing Procurement and Accounting Logistics (OPAL) rollout, and transition to a new OEO program.

FY27 Performance Measures:

Measure	FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
Average number of days for Law to draft contracts ¹	18	≤ 30	≤ 30
Amount of water sequestration collections ²	\$11.8M	\$13.0M	\$13.0M

¹ Though the Department achieved an average of 18 days in FY25, the baseline target of 30 days is being maintained due to staffing turnover in the unit responsible for this work.

² Water Sequestration Collections are the funds collected from delinquent landlords with water and sewer rent debt because the Law Department has either filed or threatened to file a court petition to appoint a Sequestrator.

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Program Name: Compliance & Legislation

Program Number: 05

FY27 Proposed General Fund: \$2,431,444

Program Description: The Compliance and Legislation program encompasses the Department’s Compliance Unit, Right-to-Know Unit, Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and Privacy Law Unit, Legislation and Legal Counsel Unit, the reformatted E-Discovery & Data Strategies Unit, and the Communications Team. It manages the majority of the City’s requests from the public under the PA Right-to-Know (RTK) Law; advises City departments on HIPAA and other confidentiality requirements for healthcare, social services, and criminal justice information as well as manages incidents involving potential HIPAA/privacy breaches; coordinates all Law Department communications and advises clients on communications matters; oversees investigative requests and manages various investigations on behalf of the Law Department; and manages electronic discovery matters and data management projects.

This program also supports the Mayor’s Office, City Council, and all City agencies in drafting, reviewing, and formulating legislation. Moreover, this program conducts research and analysis regarding issues arising under the state or federal constitution, state preemption, and the Philadelphia Home Rule Charter, provides practical and legal advice on a variety of issues, and frequently drafts formal opinions for various City officials.

FY27 Strategic Goals:

- **Proactive Advising:** The Compliance & Legislation Group will continue to provide high-quality legal and practical advice regarding operations and new initiatives of the Administration and City Council.
- **Prisons Compliance:** The Compliance Unit will work towards substantial compliance with the Remick settlement agreement and the \$25 million Sanctions Order issued in August 2024. As of March 2026, the City is in partial or substantial compliance with all 18 substantive provisions of the Settlement agreement and 23 of 24 Sanctions Order requirements. The Law Department will continue working with the Philadelphia Department of Prisons and City stakeholders to further efforts to reduce the incarcerated population.
- **RTK Responsiveness:** The RTK Unit has managed an ever-increasing load of time-sensitive requests and we are seeking to add an attorney position in FY27. The Department will continue to refine processes so that the number of appeals taken continues to decrease.

FY27 Performance Measures:

Measure	FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
Percentage of right-to-know requests that are appealed	5.6%	< 8.0%	< 8.0%

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Program Name: Litigation

Program Number: 03

FY27 Proposed General Fund: \$21,906,323

Program Description: The Litigation program defends the City, its departments, employees, and elected officials in litigation regarding civil rights, property damage, personal injury, and commercial claims, in both state and federal courts. Attorneys also represent the City in all labor and employment litigation, and work to enforce the City's health, building, zoning, fire, air management, and other regulatory codes. This program also contains the Affirmative and Special Litigation Unit, which files major multi-defendant, public policy-oriented lawsuits and defends the City in other complex litigation.

FY27 Strategic Goals:

- **Affirmative Litigation for Public Welfare:** Over the next year, the Litigation Group will continue to identify opportunities to further the City's climate change initiatives and combat systemic public nuisances or harmful, legally suspect policies of other governments that threaten public welfare, health, or resident safety. The program has a goal of filing 4-5 large affirmative cases per year to both hold bad actors accountable and secure funds to combat systemic harm.
- **Ramping Up Code Enforcement:** Over the next year, the Code Enforcement team will mobilize new staff added in the FY26 Budget to accelerate its work in partnership with the Police Department and the Department of Licenses & Inspections – Quality of Life to hold nuisance actors accountable for the harm they cause to neighborhoods and communities.
- **Federal Grant and Policy Support:** The Law Department will provide ongoing guidance to the City through the anticipated shifts in policy, regulation, and legal landscape that often accompany a change in federal administration. By proactively identifying opportunities and potential challenges, the Law Department will collaborate internally and be leading advisors for departments navigating this evolving political and legal environment.

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FY27 Performance Measures:

Measure	FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
Percentage of cases resolved without payment ¹	38%	≥ 45%	≥ 45%
Settlement cost compared to initial risk assessment	69%	< 77%	< 75%
Cases filed by the Code & Public Nuisance Litigation Unit ²	N/A	3,250	3,250
Revenue generated from affirmative and general litigation	\$68.4M	≥ \$40.0M	≥ \$40.0M

¹ The FY25 actual of 38% is due to the timing of cases and how and when the court decides whether to grant meritorious motions.

² FY25 data is not available as this measure was introduced in FY26.

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Program Name: Social Services

Program Number: 02

FY27 Proposed General Fund: \$1,164,161

Program Description: The Social Services program includes the Child Welfare Unit (CWU), which represents the Department of Human Services (DHS) in dependency, termination of parental rights, guardianship, and administrative appeal hearings; and the Health and Adult Services Unit (HAS), which supports the missions of the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH), the Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS), and the Office of Homeless Services (OHS).

FY27 Strategic Goals:

- **Enhanced Training and Professional Development:** CWU will strengthen its ongoing mission to safely reduce the number of children in DHS custody by increasing permanency through more robust training and onboarding for new attorneys, expanded subject area professional development opportunities for all unit members, and a new training program led by a Senior Attorney position. CWU will also review expungement practices and integrate child welfare-specific guidance into inclusive language standards to support fair placement decisions and permanency outcomes.
- **Expedite Finalization Process:** By prioritizing assignment of matters to attorneys and legal assistants and ongoing review of internal procedures, CWU will facilitate timely case progression and reduce unnecessary delays in permanency.
- **Commitment to Mental Health and Wellness Services:** Through advocacy in mental health court and increasing the number of written referrals for mental health patients, HAS will broaden its scope of support and representation of DBHIDS, furthering its mission to provide essential behavioral health services to Philadelphians in the least restrictive setting. The HAS team will also engage in further coordinated collaboration with internal and external partners to provide subject matter expertise and comprehensive legal advice and strategies for the Administration’s Wellness ecosystem.

FY27 Performance Measures:

Measure	FY25 Actual	FY26 Target	FY27 Target
Average caseload per lawyer	97	≤ 100	≤ 100
Dollar amount of judgments secured from lead court proceedings during the reporting period ¹	\$116,500	\$128,150	\$140,965

¹ The target for this measure represents a 10% increase year over year.