

BASF Issues Statement Regarding Detention of San Francisco Deputy Public Defender Jami Tillotson

February 3, 2015 –The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) is concerned about the detention of a San Francisco Deputy Public Defender at the Hall of Justice on January 27, 2015. The encounter was captured on video and shows Deputy Public Defender Jami Tillotson being handcuffed and taken away after she objected to San Francisco Police Department officers seemingly attempting to photograph her client outside a courtroom. Ms. Tillotson apparently remained in custody for an hour.

The conduct by police -- arresting an attorney in a courthouse in the presence of her client, when she appears to have been doing nothing more than attempting to represent her client regarding his rights -- is deeply troubling. Such action undermines the exercise of one's constitutional right to counsel, threatens the important relationship between client and counsel, and demeans attorneys and the legal profession.

The courthouse is an independent branch of government where access to justice, the right to counsel, and decorum should be most respected and protected by those sworn to uphold the law.

The Bar Association of San Francisco is one of the largest metropolitan bar associations in the country. We stand for the rule of law and the protection of the rights of all individuals. We ask for a prompt and thorough investigation into this incident, to assure respect and honor for the courthouse, court business, the right to counsel, and the practice of law.

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The Bar Association of San Francisco (BASF) is a nonprofit voluntary membership organization of over 8,000 attorneys, law students and legal professionals in the Bay Area. Founded in 1872, BASF is one of the largest and most dynamic metropolitan bar associations in the U.S., with a long and distinguished record of community action, public service and service to the legal profession.