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Subject: FW: Support for Proposed Changes to CrR 7.8
Date: Monday, September 28, 2020 8:08:28 AM

From: Kimberly D. Ambrose [mailto:kambrose@uw.edu]
Sent: Saturday, September 26, 2020 3:49 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Support for Proposed Changes to CrR 7.8

Dear Justices:

I am on the faculty at the University of Washington School of Law and Direct the Race and Justice Clinic which focuses its multi-forum work on the overrepresentation of youth of color in the juvenile and adult criminal legal systems. I also teach Professional Responsibility, Race and the Law and a seminar on Juvenile Justice. These comments are my own, made in my personal capacity.

I fully support the amendments put forth by the Washington Defender Association which would be a modest step to address a system that targets and punishes poor people of color at a disproportionate rate. The status quo procedural system of unlimited mandatory hearings was created to serve the professionals who administer that system. The system is working as intended. It results in accused individuals with limited resources and great distrust of the system being forced to travel to a courthouse, wait around, attend numerous what can appear to be meaningless hearings under the threat of arrest if they do not appear. When these accused individuals fail to make it to the courthouse, warrants are issued which can result in not only their arrest and incarceration but in additional charges for bail jumping or the new crime of "failing to appear." The trauma that this system inflicts leads accused individuals to plead guilty when they should not, just so that they don't have to keep coming back to court. It is this power to control through threat of arrest that some system participants may be concerned about giving up because they are committed to a structure that holds accused people "accountable" even before they have been found guilty of a crime. The proposed change is a step toward bringing the system a little more in line with the reality of the lives of the people that the criminal legal system ensnares.

Thank you for your consideration,

Kim Ambrose
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Director, Race and Justice Clinic
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