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October 30, 2024

Washington Supreme Court
Temple of Justice
Olympia, WA

RE: Proposed Amendments to the Caseload Standards for Indigent Defense


To the Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court,

I am the San Juan County Prosecutor and I write to respectfully request that the Court reject the proposed Amendments to caseload standards for Indigent defense.

In addition to the many practical and legal reasons outlined in the numerous comments submitted by others in opposition to these amendments, I am concerned that the proposed limits do not recognize the fact that attorneys' capacity increases with experience. A seasoned defense attorney who has practiced for decades has a much greater capacity than a new law school graduate handling their first set of cases. It is our experience that contract defense counsel for small jurisdictions, like San Juan County, is typically highly experienced and often contracts with multiple jurisdictions simultaneously based on this higher experience level. The proposed amendments would restrict this practice.

The amendments as proposed are a broadbrush solution to a problem that has not been adequately studied, as outlined in the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys' October 18, 2024 letter. A hasty solution often breeds more severe complications. I urge you to reject the amendments as proposed and take the time and resources needed to properly address these issues.

Sincerely,


Amy S. Vira
Prosecuting Attorney