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Subject: FW: Support for Proposed Public Defense Reforms
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From: Andrew Stine-Rowe <andrew.stinerowe@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 11:38 AM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Support for Proposed Public Defense Reforms

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Dear Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court,

I am writing as a physician and a concerned member of our community to express my strong support for the proposed reforms to Washington's public defense system. The changes under consideration—to lower the maximum number of cases public defenders handle each year and to require increased support staff, including administrative support, social workers, and investigators—are essential steps to ensure a fair, just, and humane legal process for all Washingtonians.

In my medical practice, I frequently see how overwhelming caseloads and a lack of essential support affect patient care. Similarly, the excessive caseloads currently placed on public defenders limit their ability to give each client the time and attention required for a robust defense. Reducing these caseloads is crucial for ensuring that every defendant receives adequate representation, which, in turn, promotes better and fairer outcomes for all.

The inclusion of support staff such as social workers and investigators acknowledges the importance of a holistic approach, an approach that has been proven to benefit both individuals and the community. Social workers, for instance, can assist clients with complex personal and social issues that may contribute to their involvement with the legal system. By addressing these underlying factors, clients have a better chance of rehabilitation, reducing their likelihood of re-offense and thereby benefiting the entire community.

These reforms are necessary and long overdue. They represent a vital investment in a public defense system that upholds the rights of every citizen and aligns with our shared values of fairness, equity, and due process. As members of the judiciary, you have a unique opportunity to reshape public defense in our state for the better, promoting a more just and effective legal system.

Thank you for considering these essential changes.

Sincerely,

Andrew Stine-Rowe, MD, MPH
Bellingham