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Subject: FW: Standards for Indigent Defense
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From: Angela Horwath <angelah@pacificpointlaw.com>
Sent: Monday, August 19, 2024 7:00 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Standards for Indigent Defense

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Good evening,

I own a criminal defense firm in Tacoma, Washington. My firm employs 8-10 attorneys at a given time and holds contracts to provide public defense services with 4 cities. The current standards case limits should be modified but I firmly believe that the proposed indigent defense standards should not be adopted as currently recommended by the WSBA.

The primary reason it should not be adopted is the existing shortage of attorneys seeking to enter the public defense sector. The proposed case reduction will require more than double the amount of public defenders in a given court. This will be virtually impossible to fill in large cities but it will be the rural cities that will struggle the most to find attorneys to fill these positions. I have been seeking an entry level attorney for nearly a year, offering a competitive salary starting at \$90,000 with benefits and hybrid remote work and have gotten very few applicants. And zero applicants with any courtroom experience. I am hearing similar stories from my colleagues.

We are seeing that attorneys coming out of law school post covid want to work from home, they do not want to be in the courtroom or go to the jails to visit incarcerated clients. Significantly higher pay per attorney is a better solution than significantly less cases.

Even if we were to double the amount of attorneys that we currently have in my cities, we would then have to provide the infrastructure to house, train and support all of these attorneys, which will be extremely difficult.

The reduction from 400 (unweighted) cases a year to 120 cases is far too extreme and unnecessary for quality representation. I am proud of the work we do in our cities under the current guidelines. My attorneys are well trained and well supported and we are providing excellent representation. Reducing caseload limits so dramatically is unnecessary.

I do believe that appropriate reduction lies somewhere between 250 and 300 unweighted misdemeanor cases annually. That reduction in combination with additional support staff, such as investigators, social workers and more legal assistants will allow for more time for each case without contributing to public defense shortage.

Thank you,

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