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From: Davis, Brandon <bdavis@kingcounty.gov>
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Subject: In Support of Reduced Caseloads for Defense

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I am a King County Public Defender, currently practicing in Kent. My caseload is mostly class A and B violent and sex offenses. I have been practicing since June 2018.

I hope that we have put to rest the stereotype of the lazy and incompetent public defender who couldn't get another job. The attorneys at King County DPD would be the most sought-after lawyers in any job they chose. On paper, they are some of the best attorneys in the field: they clerked for federal judges, attended high-ranking law schools, won awards, or earned any of the other accolades that are valued in our profession. In practice, they are intelligent, thoughtful and passionate advocates. This is not a job that people choose out of last resort. The public defenders I work with are mission driven and they do excellent work.

But mission and drive are not enough to sustain a career. It is precisely because my colleagues' commitment that they are leaving the profession. We want to do good work and we can't because the caseloads are too high. It is impossible to give zealous representation to everyone who comes across our desks.

The attrition in King County DPD is a crisis. Serious cases are bounced around from multiple attorneys, while our clients sit in jail for 4 or 5 years. This is not normal. And the reason these attorneys are leaving is that the caseloads are too high. We want to do good work and we can't. We refuse to be mediocre, so we leave.

The only way to ensure that defendants in our state are given high quality representation is to lower the caseloads of the defense attorneys who represent them.

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