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Subject: FW: I am in support of the new caseload standards
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From: Caitlin Earnest <earnestc@lvdef.com>
Sent: Friday, October 25, 2024 2:08 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: I am in support of the new caseload standards

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Hello,

I am an attorney at a private firm that holds misdemeanor public defense contracts for the cities within Cowlitz County. While I understand that the proposed caseload standards will create significant funding issues, I also believe it is critical to address the manageability of current caseload standards.

Many cases are complex and require an extraordinary amount of care, investigation, and discovery review. In some situations, there are hours upon hours of body camera footage to sort through. In addition, it is impossible to properly address mental health issues and there is simply not enough time to sit in 1077 evaluations. The drug epidemic has continually festered drug-induced mental health issues and oftentimes those issues do not receive near the level of attention necessary to ensure our clients' rights are protected. Plus, the socioeconomic status of our clients inhibits their abilities to get appropriately medicated, even if they are not struggling with addiction issues. Every day we see unique and complicated mental health and addiction-related issues that need to be addressed in unique and complicated ways.

Our firm cares deeply about the work we do. We love our community and work hard to be the best advocates possible for our clients. But we are also humans with the potential for burnout.

Lowering the caseload standards would help ensure our clients get the best possible representation. In addition, I believe it would protect attorneys' mental health by better mitigating and preventing the burnout so famously experienced by public defenders while simultaneously attracting new attorneys to the field after seeing positive change to address overly burdensome workloads.

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Cait Earnest
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***** WE MOVED! Starting July 1st, 2024, our office is now located at 1516 Hudson Street, Suite 101, Longview Washington *****

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