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Subject: FW: Support of Public Defense Caseload Standards
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From: Cassie Trueblood <ctrueblood@snocopda.org>
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 10:18 AM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Support of Public Defense Caseload Standards

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Justices of the Supreme Court of Washington,

I am writing to urge you to adopt the proposed Public Defense Caseload Standards. The standards will give our State's public defenders what they need to do the job that the Constitution mandates – time, resources, and support. Without the adoption of these standards, indigent Washingtonians will not be afforded a Constitutionally sufficient defense.

I have been an attorney at the Snohomish County Public Defender Association since 2006. I have been an attorney in district court, juvenile court, superior court, and have supervised our misdemeanor and felony units. Over the past 18 years, the practice of public defense has changed substantially. Increased video surveillance (including businesses and private citizen Ring cams, etc) and the welcome addition of police body-worn cameras have dramatically increased the amount of discovery that public defenders deal with in almost every case. For example, I had a homicide trial in 2014 where the discovery consisted of approximately 300 pages of paper discovery and one two-hour video recording of a witness interview. Today, I have a factually similar homicide case. The 2024 case has nearly 4000 pages of paper discovery and approximately 43 hours of video evidence, including police body-worn camera and video from multiple business' CCTV systems. Watching the video alone took me more than a full week of work. Under the current caseload standards, this case could potentially be one of **150 similar cases** assigned to me this year. This is obviously impossible.

In addition to increased video evidence, public defenders are also increasingly learning and using science in our cases. From DNA to complex cell phone mapping to research on youth brain development, public defenders are regularly learning and applying new areas of science. Where each of these areas have experts who have dedicated years of study to learn and apply these technical subjects, public defenders must quickly get up to speed to be able to competently explain these areas to judges and juries.

The new standards also provide for essential supports such as investigators and legal

assistants. Investigators are crucial to public defense work. Caselaw and the RPCs require investigation into all criminal cases. Investigators are an important part of the public defense team and interview witnesses, photograph evidence, acquire records, and testify in court. The new standards guarantee that those facing criminal charges will have access to this essential resource.

Gideon v. Wainwright did not guarantee counsel only in cases when it's feasible. The comments against the standards for reasons of fiscal inability to support them are concerning. Justice in Washington should not and cannot be different for those who can afford a private attorney and those who cannot. Public defenders must have sufficient supports, resources, and time to represent our clients in a way that the Constitution and human dignity require. Please adopt the proposed standards.

Thank you,
Cassie Trueblood, WSBA #37829

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