



October 30, 2024

## City of Olympia | Capital of Washington State

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Washington State Supreme Court  
Temple of Justice  
415 12th Ave SW  
Olympia, Washington 98501

To the Honorable Members of the Washington State Supreme Court:

**Subject:** Comments on Proposed Changes to Public Defense Standards

On behalf of the City of Olympia, I am writing to express concerns regarding the proposed changes to public defense standards, which would reduce the current requirements by approximately 70%. While we support the goal of ensuring fair and effective representation for all individuals entering the court system, we are concerned that these proposed reductions will significantly impact both the quality of representation and the financial health of our city.

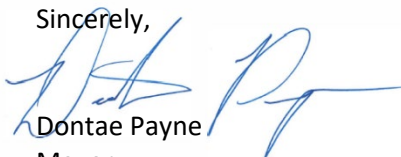
Washington state is currently facing a critical shortage of public defenders, with many cities and counties struggling to staff sufficient representation to meet current standards. Reducing these standards will likely worsen this shortage, as fewer attorneys may enter or remain in public defense, further straining an already overburdened system. With an increased caseload per public defender, we are concerned that representation quality will be compromised, ultimately affecting the fairness and equity of the judicial process for those who cannot afford private legal services.

The estimated financial impact of implementing these changes on the City of Olympia's budget is substantial. In the first year alone, we anticipate a cost increase of approximately \$600,000, which could grow to over \$1 million in subsequent years. This occurs at a time when Olympia is already grappling with a long-term budget deficit projected to exceed \$4 million. Given these financial constraints, absorbing such substantial additional costs would require either significant budget cuts to essential services or additional revenue sources that may not be feasible in the current economic climate.

We urge the Court to consider the ramifications of these proposed changes, not only on the equitable representation of individuals who rely on public defense, but also the financial implications for local government budgets.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this critical issue. We look forward to supporting efforts that maintain the high standards of our legal system while addressing the realities faced by our communities.

Sincerely,



Dontae Payne  
Mayor

cc: Olympia City Council  
Jay Burney, Olympia City Manager  
Mark Barber, Olympia City Attorney