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**From:** Beckett, Claire (DPD) <clbeckett@kingcounty.gov>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 18, 2024 4:29 PM  
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**Subject:** Comment in Support of Proposed Indigent Defense Standards

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Justices of the Court –

I’m writing in support of the proposed indigent defense standards.

I’ve been a public defender in King County for a little over a year at this point. This time has been incredibly rewarding for me, but even in this short time, I can already see how unsustainable this status quo is. Even while carrying a caseload of “less-important”, misdemeanor cases (I put this in quotes because misdemeanors can still have drastic, life-altering consequences for our clients), I have already been forced into making difficult choices that ultimately impact the quality of representation I am able to provide for my clients. Do I visit a client in jail, or do I spend that time doing extensive research into a motion that may decide the outcome of another client’s case? Do I reach out to an incarcerated client’s family members so that they know where they are, or do I review the increasing amount of evidence that is available in every case? Do I have an in-depth conversation with a client so I can give a powerful sentencing argument, or do I draft a negotiation pitch for another client’s matter? There is no right answer to these questions, and I hate to think how these decisions will become even more drastic and impactful when I am carrying a felony caseload.

In representing our clients, I try to keep in mind something that a mentor advised me while I was studying to be a public defender – be the zealous attorney that a rich person would have access to. Our justice system – which proclaims that we are all equal under the law – demands this. With the caseload standards that we currently have, this precept – while already aspirational – is impossible to achieve.

This doesn’t touch on the personal price of leaving these caseload standards unchanged. Doing this vital work should not force someone to choose between being an effective attorney and being a

present partner/parent/friend/daughter, but without an adjustment to the current caseload standards, that is the choice that many of us public defenders are facing.

Don't force public defenders in Washington into making these choices. Please adopt the proposed caseload standards.

Thank you,

**Claire Beckett (she/her)**

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