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Subject: FW: Comments Supporting Proposed Changes
Date: Friday, November 1, 2024 8:11:53 AM

From: Charbonneau, Colin <CCHARBONNEAU@spokanecounty.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 5:37 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Comments Supporting Proposed Changes

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Honorable Justices,

I write in support of the proposed changes to the Standards for Indigent Defense. Immediate changes are necessary to ensure that the next generation of public defenders have the tools to effectuate the Constitutional mandate of effective assistance of counsel. My office has experienced a well-documented exodus of experienced public defenders. In the last eight months, six of the seven attorneys that have resigned were certified to handle the most complex criminal litigation. That level of experience is not easily replaced.

Without changes, this revolving door of public defense attorneys will continue as irreplaceable amounts of institutional knowledge exit the profession. Under the current Standards, the constantly increasing role of technology in criminal cases creates an impossible situation for my attorneys. My attorneys are forced to triage, to choose which clients are deserving of the most time. My attorneys deserve better. More importantly, our clients deserve better.

The fiscal implications of proposed changes are undeniable. The State of Washington is reluctant to fully fund public defense. Washington Counties, with limited financial resources, are essentially tasked with fulfilling Gideon's promise on their own. Undoubtedly, the Legislature needs to act. That does not mean that this Court should sit idle in hopes that the Legislature will take action. The Constitutional guarantees of effective assistance of counsel are not contingent on budgetary concerns. I ask the Court to uphold the Constitution by adopting the proposed changes to the Standards for Indigent Defense.

Sincerely,

Colin Charbonneau

Director

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