



From the Desk of Chief Darrell Lowe  
Redmond Police Department  
8701 160<sup>th</sup> Ave NE  
Redmond, WA 98052

October 31, 2024

## **Request to Reject Proposed Revised Standards for Indigent Defense and Caseload Limits**

Chief Justice Gonzalez and Associate Justices:

As the police chief for the City of Redmond, I respectfully request that the Court reject the proposed revised standards for indigent defense and caseload limits for public defenders. While public defenders play a critical, constitutionally required role, any policy that reduces accountability or compromises victims' rights in the name of reform is not a fair solution.

We all took an oath to ensure a safe Washington, advocating for policies that support crime reduction, victim support, community trust, and offender accountability. The proposed caseload limits will strain public defense services to a point where fewer cases can be addressed, undermining public safety and the justice system's credibility.

Cities and counties have reported that achieving the proposed caseload reductions would demand significantly higher budgets and more attorneys than are currently available. Without sufficient public defenders, the system will see a rise in cases dismissed due to lack of counsel, reducing accountability for those who commit crimes and disproportionately impacting public safety. A drastic reduction in caseloads does not translate to a decrease in crime or harm to victims, who often bear the consequences of crime without adequate representation in the system.

Discussions about the proposed rule change have largely overlooked crime victims despite their fundamental role in the justice process. As cited in RCW 7.69.010, Washington law mandates that victims' rights be honored as vigorously as the rights of criminal defendants. Victims deserve dignity, respect, and meaningful participation in criminal proceedings. Reducing the capacity to prosecute cases could lead to an erosion of faith in the justice system, encouraging some to seek vigilante justice rather than rely on due process.

The Washington State Constitution emphasizes victims' rights, including the right to be notified, attend trials, and make statements. These rights assume a functioning court system where victims can engage with their cases. Should these proposed changes lead to resource shortages, the state risks failing to provide the due process and support crime victims are constitutionally guaranteed.

Any solution that sacrifices public safety or the rights of victims to address indigent defense challenges. Instead, I strongly urge the Court to reject this proposal and explore whether current indigent defense caseloads in Washington State present genuine constitutional issues for defendants. If such problems exist, I encourage the Court to work collaboratively with other criminal justice stakeholders and the Legislature to develop solutions that respect both the constitutional rights of the accused and the victims' rights.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Darrell Lowe".

Darrell Lowe, Chief of Police  
Redmond Police Department