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Subject: FW: Washington State PD caseload standards
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From: Schulz, Gina <Gina.Schulz@pubdef.state.mn.us>
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To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Washington State PD caseload standards

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Honorable Justices of the Washington Supreme Court,

I am writing to respectfully voice my support for the revised Washington State Bar Association standards for public defender caseloads. I write from the perspective of an appellate public defender in Minnesota, but I do want to make it clear that the opinions expressed here are my own and do not necessarily represent those of my employer.

Everyone in the justice system will benefit from manageable caseloads, not just public defenders and their clients. If public defenders have time to thoroughly and accurately litigate their cases, that will greatly assist the bench. As a former law clerk, I know that good lawyers make a judge's job easier, and no lawyer can be good while handling 80 felony cases a year. Further, easing the burden on public defenders will only increase public trust in the judicial system and demonstrate that it is invested in ensuring fair trials and valid convictions.

A fair trial gives everyone closure: the attorneys, the defendant, the victims. No one should have to serve a prison sentence while thinking, "if only my attorney was prepared for trial, maybe I wouldn't be here." No victim should have to wonder whether the right person was brought to justice, and no lawyer should have to worry whether their client would be free if only they had more than a few hours to prepare for trial. Public defenders are professionals like any other, and it is too much pressure to put on one person's shoulders without giving them the time and resources they need to bear it responsibly. Indigent defendants—even guilty ones—are people like any other and deserve the closure that comes with due process and constitutionally adequate counsel.

I respectfully urge this Court to adopt the revised caseloads.

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