

October 21, 2024

Dear Justices,

I rise in strong support of the proposed changes to Washington's indigent defense standards. The constitutional guarantees of a right to effective legal counsel and the right to a speedy trial are critical; without these new caseload standards, our public defenders will not be able to effectively support either of these rights.

I am a public defender in Western Washington. I have been an attorney in Washington State since 2019. Prior to that I worked as a state public defender in multiple cities in Alaska, as well as with the federal public defender of Alaska. I have dedicated my professional career to work in public defense. I am proud to be a public defender, and even more proud to serve amongst an amazing group of investigators, paralegals, social workers, attorneys, administrative staff, and others. However,

I myself, and many of my colleagues, have suffered from the unique challenges that indigent criminal defense professionals face. The sheer number of clients, and the voluminous discovery present in modern day criminal cases, and the secondary trauma makes this work incredibly difficult under the best of circumstances.

The new caseload standards under consideration are a much needed step in order to retain senior level attorneys and recruit new attorneys into the profession. These standards are needed because criminal cases have become more involved and complicated in modern times. For example, the need to review hours and hours of police bodycam footage alone, which requires an attorney's visual and audio focus, has significantly increased the amount of time spent reviewing discovery on each case.

Handling a criminal case load effectively is a skill that takes time to develop. These new caseload standards are needed so that public defenders can handle their cases efficiently which is to the benefit of defenders, prosecutors, and society as a whole; we have a collective interest in the fair, impartial, and swift resolution and disposition of criminal cases.

The proposed changes promote fairness, equity, and justice, and it is my sincere hope that they will be approved and adopted.

Thank you,

Glen Rice