

**From:** [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)  
**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelynn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for CrR3.1/CrRLJ3.1/JuCR9.2 STDS Amendment  
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**From:** Yamahiro, Hana <hyamahiro@kingcounty.gov>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 23, 2024 7:15 AM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Support for CrR3.1/CrRLJ3.1/JuCR9.2 STDS Amendment

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Dear Justices,

I am urging you to adopt the rule change that would provide caseload relief for public defenders in Washington so that we can stay in this job, our clients can have the representation they deserve as folks from the most marginalized communities, and those impacted by the harm caused can have resolve and finality in a reasonable timeframe.

I went to law school to become a public defender because and if the new caseload standards are not passed I will have to do what so many of my brilliant, passionate, and fierce colleagues have already had to do – leave this work, after less than 5 years. I became a public defender so I could advocate for those who need my help. I have felt privileged to be able to support, uplift, and sit with my clients who have never had someone listen to them, much less fight for them. But I have found over the last few years that I have drifted further away from the lawyer I wanted to be and the ones my clients deserve because my caseload is unmanageable.

I know that if my caseload was more reasonable I would be the kind of attorney my clients deserve – prepared, well rested, energetic. It is shameful and disappointing that the lawyer my clients get is one who doesn't have time to review discovery in a timely manner, to review the details of their cases with them in a timely manner, and to visit them in jail frequently enough. I have to look my clients in the eyes and tell them that they will likely be in jail for months (or for more serious cases, years) before I will be able to resolve their case or take it to trial. If I want to research a legal issue I don't know about, literally the bare minimum of what should be expected, I have to do it late at night or on the weekends. My days frequently do not allow me time to take a break to eat lunch and they certainly do not afford me time to sit down to research and draft motions that have the potential to alter the lives of my clients and the paths their cases take.

Adjusting the caseload standards does not only benefit me, my colleagues, and my clients. The

community will be safer if we give adequate resources to public defense. If attorneys have more time to spend on our cases we can actually advocate for resolutions that will break cycles – treatment, restorative justice, stability. Also, victims who have been harmed will not have to wait years for resolve. I have listened to many people who have been harmed anguish over how long finality takes. It's not fair to my clients, their loved ones, or victims of crime to allow the criminal legal system to continue this way.

It has taken me weeks to sit down and write in support of this rule change because I'm exhausted, stressed, and rarely have time to focus on anything other than what the following day requires. The other reason it's taken me a long time to write this is because it's painful to reckon with the opposition to the rule change – to confront that so many in society do not value the lives of my clients, do not believe that poor people charged with crimes deserve quality representation, and do not think public defenders deserve the changes required to sustain ourselves in this work. I am asking the Court to listen to the voices of those of us who actually do this work, who know what it takes to defend those most vulnerable in society, and who want desperately to stay in this line of work and serve the community. A change like this one takes courage and creativity, but it's worth it. Without this rule change public defenders will leave in droves, more than they already have, and the fears highlighted by the opposition (systemic collapse) is only more likely.

Thank you,

**Hana Yamahiro** (she/her)

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