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Subject: FW: Caseload Standards
Date: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 1:04:30 PM

From: Benoit, Haley <n-hbenoit@kingcounty.gov>
Sent: Wednesday, September 25, 2024 1:04 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Caseload Standards

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Dear Washington Supreme Court,

I am writing to ask you to please support reduced caseload standards. I am a social work intern for the Public Defender's office in King County. I love my job and I love doing my very best work for my clients, however due to current caseloads it is humanly impossible for me to even do the bare minimum asked of me.

We desperately need more support. Our entire office has been on the brink of collapse, with no relief in sight. Every time an attorney burns out and leaves my office, the volume of work increases even more, and our clients suffer.

I tell myself multiple times a day, reassuring myself that it is not humanly possible to get done all of the work I need to do. Recently I learned about the concept of 'moral injury.' How my coworkers and I are put in an impossible situation where we have to constantly juggle emergent demands while the stakes are so high, and when peoples' liberty and lives are on the line. We are not given the resources to do our jobs effectively, and while our clients suffer the most, we are also harmed in this process. We agonize over tasks not completed, and the physical limits of our bodies and being a human. We have living bodies that needs rest, and sustenance.

The poor representation that many of our clients receive is a hidden cost that the public never sees, and politicians feel no impetus to fix. Unlike most legal practice areas, public defense requires stringent requirements to ensure that the government doesn't go back on Gideon's Promise. It is part of your important role in WA State

to ensure that our residents receive their 6th Amendment rights.

Again, I love my job, I have only been here for a month, and I want to make this my career. I have a deep commitment to my clients and my coworkers, but this is not sustainable. Please, we cannot wait for years of discussion and slow movement, we need help now. Please accept the proposed rules.

Thank you for listening,

Hayley Benoit (she/her/hers)
DPD Social Work Intern

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