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**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelynn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Public Comment Regarding Proposed Changes to Public Defense Standards  
**Date:** Thursday, October 31, 2024 3:30:12 PM

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**From:** Holly Pederson <holly@pedersondefense.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 31, 2024 3:05 PM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Public Comment Regarding Proposed Changes to Public Defense Standards

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To whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my concerns about the proposed changes to Washington's public defense standards, as the proposed changes would have significant negative impacts on practitioners like myself and are unnecessary given the protections set forth in the current standards as well as through the Rules of Professional Conduct.

### **1. Financial Impact on Public Defense Contractors:**

The proposed lower caseload limits would require me to drop one of my two partial public defense contracts, drastically reducing my income. Many practitioners, especially in rural areas like myself, rely on more than one partial public defense contracts to make a living and support their families. Additionally, prohibiting private cases as a supplement for income would make this work even more financially unsustainable, forcing defenders like myself, with over a decade of experience, to leave a career we are deeply committed to. This is the work I have been doing for essentially my entire career. If these changes are implemented, I would effectively be forced out of public defense, giving up my career in public defense.

### **2. Recently Established Caseload Limits:**

We recently implemented caseload limits to address concerns over workload, which have been effective without these additional reductions. Adjusting limits again so soon seems unnecessary and disruptive.

### **3. Impact on Quality of Representation:**

Managing more than one partial contracts enables me to serve a diverse range of cases, enriching my practice and ensuring continuity for clients with overlapping legal issues. The proposed restrictions would reduce this diversity, diminishing the quality and consistency of representation I can provide.

#### **4. Adequacy of Existing Standards:**

The Rules of Professional Conduct already set strong standards for competence, communication, and client care. Adding further restrictions feels redundant and imposes burdens without addressing real deficiencies in the system.

In summary, while I support efforts to enhance public defense, I urge the Court to reconsider these proposed changes. Current standards and recent caseload limits already ensure competent representation, and these new limits risk destabilizing public defense.

Thank you for your consideration.

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