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**Subject:** FW: In support of new caseload standards  
**Date:** Friday, October 18, 2024 9:55:43 AM

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**From:** Williams, Holly (DPD) <[hwilliams@kingcounty.gov](mailto:hwilliams@kingcounty.gov)>  
**Sent:** Friday, October 18, 2024 9:55 AM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <[SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV](mailto:SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV)>  
**Subject:** In support of new caseload standards

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Hello,

I am writing in support of the proposed court rule amendments to codify the WSBA's recently passed criminal caseload standards for public defenders. The WSBA Board of Governors approved these long-overdue updates to the maximum workload public defenders can reasonably be expected to carry for a simple and obvious reason: They recognized the status quo has required public defense to compromise our ethical obligations to our clients.

I have seen this firsthand as a social worker who supports our attorneys. For one of my clients, a Black young man, only 24 years old, suffering from severe mental health and substance use challenges, was assigned four different attorneys in a year on a Class A felony offense. While everyone tried their absolute hardest to represent the client to the best of their abilities, attorney turnover due to unmanageable caseloads is causing ethical violations.

We need to be accountable to all individuals in our state. Public defenders represent communities that have long been at a disadvantage in opportunity due to structural inequalities in our society. We represent a high number of low-income, Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, transgender individuals, and people who have mental illness – the most marginalized and vulnerable in our society. They deserve to have a voice, too. Currently, the State allows certain counties to sanction discrimination by underfunding public defense.

The Supreme Court did not condition the right to an attorney on a government's ability to afford one when it decided *Gideon v. Wainright*. They rightly placed the obligation to find funding to pay for a public defender at public expense on the government seeking to take away an indigent person's liberty.

I urge you to adopt the proposed court rules that would codify the WSBA's caseload standards for public defenders.

Thank you,

**Holly Williams, MSW, LICSW** (she/her/hers)  
**Mitigation Specialist**

King County Department of Public Defense  
The Defender Association Division (TDAD)  
710 Second Avenue, Suite 700 | Seattle, WA 98104  
Phone: 206-263-2980 Fax: 206-447-2349  
[hwilliams@kingcounty.gov](mailto:hwilliams@kingcounty.gov)