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Subject: FW: WSBA Caseload Standards
Date: Thursday, October 31, 2024 4:32:48 PM

From: Carr, James <jcarr@kingcounty.gov>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 4:32 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: WSBA Caseload Standards

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I am writing in support of the proposed WSBA caseload standards.

I am a public defender in King County. Currently, I have approximately 30 clients sitting in jail awaiting trial and another 30 or 40 out of custody awaiting trial. (I wish I could give you an exact number but I'm too busy to actually look it up). The idea that our clients receive effective representation under the current caseload model is absurd and insulting.

Every day I spend in trial working on one case means another day spent ignoring the needs of those 60 or 70 other clients. Trials can often take up to 3 or 4 weeks. This means it is common for weeks to pass before I am able to even open another case file and provide the type of attention my clients need. If I wanted to see each of my jailed clients in the same day, I'd have to drive between Monroe, Seattle, and Kent, all while managing to appear in court in Seattle for those other non-jailed clients I represent.

For more serious offenses, I routinely inform my clients it will be at least a year before we can really make substantive progress on a case. Our clients often see us as their only hope, or the only person who can help them, and sometimes the best I can do is tell them "I'll get to it as soon as I can." That's simply unacceptable. And it's something we can fix with reduced caseloads and greater concern for the most basic rights of the accused.

At its core, the criminal justice system was founded on the idea that defendants are presumed innocent. Overburdening public defenders with crushing caseloads only works to undermine that principle and ensure innocent people rot in a jail cell while their attorneys try to find time for them.

Do the right thing. Apply the presumption of innocence. Pass the new standards.

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