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Subject: FW: Comment in Support of the Public Defense Proposed Revised Standards for Indigent Defense
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From: Jenna Norden <jenna.norden@co.thurston.wa.us>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 2:51 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Comment in Support of the Public Defense Proposed Revised Standards for Indigent Defense

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Justices of the Supreme Court of Washington,

I am writing to urge you to adopt the proposed Public Defense Caseload standards.

I have worked as a public defender in Thurston County, Washington for approximately ten years. I have been a Defense Attorney in Thurston County Public Defense's District Court Unit, Civil and Juvenile Unit, and Adult Felony Unit.

I love being a public defender and find my job very rewarding. When I think about what could lead me to leave public defense as a career, the thing that I immediately think of is stress – stress related to feeling that that I do not have enough time to do all the things that I need to do for my clients. There are significant portions of my job, such as legal research and writing and trial prep, that I must often do on weekends and in the morning before my standard workday begins, because I do not have enough time to do so otherwise.

I have had numerous colleagues leave public defense, and it is my perception that many have done so for reasons related to the unsustainability of current caseload standards. I understand there is opposition to the adoption of the proposed Public Defense Caseload standards because of concern that there are not enough public defenders, but I believe the current public defense standards are a big part of why it is hard to retain public defenders and to attract attorneys to public defense.

My practice in public defense has changed over time. One change that has heightened the unfeasibility of the current public defense standards is that the positive addition of law enforcement body-worn cameras has significantly increased the amount of discovery that I have to review in

almost every case. This lessens the time I have to spend on other aspects of my job.

Change must be made to the current public defense standards to ensure that public defenders in Washington State have sufficient time, resources, and support to represent our clients in the way the Constitution mandates.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jenna Storm Norden

Jenna Storm Norden (she/her)

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