



October 31, 2024

Washington State Supreme Court
P.O. Box 40929
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Chief Justice Gonzalez and Associate Justices,

I am reaching out to express my firm opposition to the recently proposed changes regarding reductions in indigent defense caseload standards. I respectfully urge the Court to reject this proposal.

I support a robust public defense system, both in Everett and throughout Washington State. Effective public defense is essential in upholding the constitutional rights of citizens within our criminal justice framework. However, such a large reduction in caseload standards is going to have a severe impact on municipalities like mine.

The proposal, which aims to decrease caseloads by approximately 70%, raises several significant concerns. My primary concerns include:

1. A shortage of qualified employees to support such a reduction,
2. Insufficient funding to recruit the needed additional employees,
3. Dismissal of alternative, more practical approaches to improving public defense, and
4. Neglect of the needs and rights of crime victims.

I am worried that if this rule change is enacted, we will see a substantial increase in case dismissals, leading to offenders being released back into our communities without accountability or without the ability of the court to divert offenders into programs that might address their underlying needs. This result is not only unjust but would also place an additional, unnecessary burden on my department's officers.

As a long-time advocate for victims, I am deeply concerned that this change would ultimately do more harm than good. Ensuring accountability for criminal actions is a crucial role of local governments. Such accountability not only delivers justice to victims but also provides opportunities for offenders to engage in treatment, recovery, reentry, and ultimately redemption—objectives that we can all agree are valuable. We must find an alternative that prioritizes both justice and public safety.

Therefore, I respectfully request that the Court reject this proposed rule change and join stakeholders in developing a more balanced and effective solution to the issues at hand.

Sincerely,
Chief John DeRousse
Everett Police Department



from the desk of
CHIEF JOHN DEROUSSE



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