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**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelynn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for Revised Public Defense Caseload Standards  
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**From:** Murov-Goodman, Jordan <jmurovgoodman@kingcounty.gov>  
**Sent:** Thursday, October 31, 2024 6:33 PM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Support for Revised Public Defense Caseload Standards

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Dear Supreme Court Justices:

If you read the constitutions or founding documents of most countries, you might think that fair legal systems are universal. But of course, it all comes down to actual practice. It is one of our most noble attributes that in this country we endeavor to make real the constitutional rights that exist on paper.

I am proud that I live in a country that works to afford its citizen those rights. I am even more proud that I live in a state that has made and continues to make strides to ensure constitutional rights remain protected. That is what this Court was doing when the existing caseloads were first implemented fifty years ago. It was true more recently when this very court promulgated GR 37, recognizing inequities that created a gap between our theoretical and practical constitutional rights.

The Court now has another critical opportunity to close another gap between paper and practice. That is why I now write to support, in the strongest terms, the new and reduced caseload standards.

No matter what angle you come at this issue from, you reach the same result. You could ask yourself, as some of my other friends and colleagues have, would you want a lawyer as burdened as we are? More foundationally, you could ask yourself if you would feel you are getting a fair shake? As defense lawyers can often tell you, people who find themselves navigating our criminal justice system often place as much importance on getting their day in court—meaning, a fair day in court—as they do on the outcome. How would you feel if your lawyer was stretched to their maximum, had to delay attention to *your* case? How would you feel if you thought your lawyer was so taxed they might miss important details? That you might not get the best representation for a life-altering event? Please, take a beat to genuinely imagine these circumstances.



You could come at this from the angle of racial justice. It is not a secret that marginalized racial groups, groups who have faced monumental obstacles we are only slowly removing generation after generation, are overrepresented among our clients. How can we walk into court every day with a straight face and announce there is “equal justice under the law” in a system designed to underserve the generationally underserved? When Washington has been at the forefront of racial justice in so many other ways, do not let our public defense system devolve into the farce it is elsewhere.

You could come at this from the angle of labor justice. It is not right to expect public defenders to work evenings, weekends, holidays, week after week after week. To forgo time with their families, with their children. To forgo physical activity and spending a couple hours outside. To forgo your physical health, to say nothing of mental and emotional. There is not “downtime” in this job as currently constructed. Trials just mean you will be pushed beyond these unfair exertions to absolute extremes. The evidence is in front of you: lawyers who have been high achievers their whole lives, who are clearly no strangers to hard work, are burning out in record times. There is not a dearth of effort. There is a dearth of basic quality of life.

Do the right thing. Give voice to our constitutional rights. Keep Washington at the forefront of the United States, and therefore the world. Thank you.

**Jordan Murov-Goodman**

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