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Subject: FW: Public Defense
Date: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 3:04:04 PM

From: Joshua Gilstrap <beggerfinch@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 2, 2024 3:02 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Public Defense

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Good afternoon,

I understand the sentiment behind wanting to provide better public defense for clients by lessening the case loads. The reality, as I see it, is you are contemplating taking a sledgehammer to a system that needs surgery with a scalpel.

For instance, I work in a small county on the east side. I live in one county and drive to the other county to provide them with public defense. I have done so for 20 years. I represent a county and 3 cities... all misdemeanor contracts for a total of a combined 300 cases/credits. If the new standards go into effect, several things will happen, as I see it.

1. I will no longer be able to represent the three cities, leaving them without public defense on their misdemeanors. It is very difficult to find attorneys in this area, and even if an attorney is willing to drive from the nearest major city, generally that doesn't last long because the winter driving and road conditions can be quite severe. For clarity, I won't be able to keep these contracts because you would be lowering my caseload.
2. Since I would be losing potentially a 1/3 of my income, I would have to reevaluate whether or not I even want to be a public defender anymore. At 1/3 less of an income, I could do a number of other jobs that are far less stressful. If I feel this way, I know many other contracted attorneys throughout the state feel this way. King County might be OK with the new standards until there is such a crisis in all of these other counties that basically King County has to pay for all of the indigent defense. Small counties just do not have the budget.
3. If there is a mass exodus of private contract attorneys, who is going to take our place? I just don't see how this is going to work and I have thought a lot about it.

Earlier, I said I would lose $\frac{1}{3}$ of my income. That would be if the county provided me with some sort of raise. Going from 300 credits to 120 credits though is more like a $\frac{2}{3}$ dip.

Please consider my comments and I thank you for your time.

Sincerely,
Joshua Gilstrap
#31102