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Subject: FW: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards
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From: Katrina Cymerman <kcymerman@snocopda.org>
Sent: Monday, October 21, 2024 10:24 AM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards

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Dear Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court,

It is imperative to adopt the proposed 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards. I started with Snohomish County Public Defender's Association in March of 2023. I started working in public defense in Orange County California where I watched my colleagues struggle to maintain their mental and physical health under their crushing caseloads. People I previously worked with had nearly 250 cases by the time I left that office and their clients suffered because of it.

When I first came to Snohomish, I took over one of the higher misdemeanor caseloads in the office. I started around 115 cases as a misdemeanor attorney and, even with that number, I felt like clients suffered because I would have to run from court room to court room to make each hearing. I was able to slowly work through the caseload and get it to a manageable level by the time I transferred it to another attorney. However, I felt that clients suffered due to my inability to give them my full, undivided attention during that period. I believe that it played into the stereotypes we so often hear as public defenders: "you work to process me through the system", "you don't care about me personally", or "I'm just another number on your calendar".

The proposed standards have the potential to rectify many inadequacies in the system as it currently exists.

Realistic caseload standards for attorneys work to better the quality of service we deliver to clients. We would be able to give more than just five to ten hours of time to significant cases and work to understand our clients on deeper levels. As someone who has experience in another state, I've seen what happens when attorneys are inundated with clients-- the quality of our representation degrades, we burn out more quickly, and our capacity for compassion dwindles.

Support for these new standards is paramount to the integrity of public defense. For these reasons, the Court should consider this input and adopt the new proposed standards.

Thank you for your time,

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