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**Washington Supreme Court**

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Dear Justices of the Washington Supreme Court,

I am writing to express my support for the proposed revisions to Washington's public defense caseload standards. As a community member directly impacted by the legal system and who currently serves as the Executive Director of an organization that supports individuals and families impacted by the legal system, I believe these changes are crucial to ensuring that everyone in Washington receives the fair and effective legal representation guaranteed by our Constitution.

### **Public Defense Crisis**

Our public defense system is in crisis. Public defenders are currently assigned more cases than they can handle, with some attorneys managing up to 150 felony cases or 400 misdemeanor cases a year. These caseloads make it impossible for defenders to give each case the attention it deserves, which leads to delays, wrongful convictions, and unequal access to justice.

### **Constitutional Rights at Risk**

Under the current system, many people accused of crimes are not receiving the defense they need or are entitled to under the law. When public defenders are stretched too thin, they cannot provide the thorough investigation, preparation, or trial advocacy that each case requires. This not only violates the rights of defendants but also weakens public trust in our justice system.

## **Support for the New Standards**

The proposed caseload limits and staffing ratios would ensure that public defenders have the time and resources to properly represent their clients. By reducing caseloads, public defenders will be able to spend more time on each case, improving the quality of representation and ensuring that every defendant receives a fair trial.

The new standards also address the need for increased support, such as investigators and social workers, which are critical for building strong defenses and addressing the underlying causes of criminal behavior. These reforms will lead to better outcomes for defendants and help restore faith in our legal system.

## **Addressing Opposition Concerns**

While some have raised concerns about the cost of implementing these changes, I believe that the long-term costs of inaction are far greater. Wrongful convictions, appeals, and overcrowded jails burden taxpayers and communities far more than investing in a stronger public defense system. The phased implementation of these standards will give jurisdictions time to adjust and secure the necessary funding to make these changes.

## **Conclusion**

The proposed public defense standards are a necessary step toward ensuring justice for all Washington residents, regardless of their financial situation or geographic location. I urge the Court to adopt these reforms and help create a more equitable and fair justice system for everyone in our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
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