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Subject: FW: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards
Date: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 11:49:16 AM

From: Lacey Gardner <lgardner@snocopda.org>
Sent: Wednesday, October 23, 2024 11:45 AM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards

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Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court
Temple of Justice
Email: supreme@courts.wa.gov.

Dear Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court,

Subject: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards

I am writing to express my strong support for the adoption of the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards. I have worked at Snohomish County Public Defender Association since December of 2013. I have loved being part of SCPDA and have a deep respect for the work that we do here, there is nowhere else that I would want to be. However, I have seen first-hand how weighed down the attorneys and staff are by the heavy caseloads and responsibilities that they are carrying. I have seen how hard they work to provide the absolute best legal representation possible for each person that they represent.

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

We need improved standards for non-attorney staff at public defender offices and agencies: administrative staff, investigators, social workers, technical

support, and HR are all vital components in a public defense system. These non-attorney positions are indispensable parts of the process, not luxuries: the best trained lawyer is ill equipped to perform the roles of these professionals; furthermore, it is cost efficient to robustly fund them. By short-staffing these roles, the jurisdictions that pay for public defense services risk paying attorneys (the highest-paid employees at a defender office) to answer phones, set up computers, and do clerical tasks, etc, which while necessary to be done do not require a lawyer (not to mention that lawyers are not trained and are not skilled at filling these roles).

Realistic and sensitive caseload standards for attorneys are also vital for a myriad of reasons: most importantly, the quality of the service we give to our clients (and thereby to the community in general) hinges on the amount of time, attention, and energy we can give to a case; there are limited hours in our days, weeks, and years, and it is simple math to show that higher caseloads mean lower quality work for any given case or client.

Please consider this input and adopt the new proposed standards.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Lacey Gardner
She/Her
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