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Subject: FW: Comment on Proposed Amendments to the Court's Standards for Indigent Defense
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From: Small, Elisabeth <ESMALL@SpokaneCounty.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 3:41 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Comment on Proposed Amendments to the Court's Standards for Indigent Defense

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Dear Chief Justice Gonzales and Members of the Court:

I am writing to inform the Court of my full support of the Proposed Amendments to the Court's Standards for Indigent Defense. I am a proud public defender serving the people of Spokane County. I have worked exclusively in indigent defense matters for the past three years. I love my job, but the caseload is unmanageable. I simply do not have enough hours in the day to give all of my clients the time they deserve. In my time here, we have lost so many extraordinary attorneys to private practice not only because of pay, but because the caseloads are astronomical. Burn out among my colleagues is not a matter of "if"—it's a matter of "when." We must make changes in order to protect our clients' rights. I plan to work as a public defender for my entire career, but I don't know if this is sustainable for the next 25+ years. Prior to coming to the Spokane County Public Defenders, I worked in private practice. The sheer amount of clients and cases I have now in comparison is mind blowing. During my time as a public defender, I have taken on duties that are better suited for a social worker. We don't have the same training as social workers and we don't have the same access and knowledge to the services that our clients desperately need. I understand the proposed case limits would be a big change, but it's a necessary change. Our job is one of the few in this country that is guaranteed by the United States Constitution and we have a duty to preserve the rights of the people of Washington.

Kind regards,

Liz Small

Liz Small

Attorney

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