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Date: Monday, October 28, 2024 10:47:10 AM

From: Hopper, Madeline <mhopper@kingcounty.gov>
Sent: Monday, October 28, 2024 10:36 AM
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Subject: CrR 3.1 Stds/CrRLJ 3.1 Stds/JuCR 9.2 Stds

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Justices of the Court, and to whom it may concern:

I am writing to express my unequivocal support of the Indigent Defense Standards as proposed by the WSBA, including the implementation timeline, and to ask that the proposal be adopted. I am a public defense attorney representing indigent people facing criminal prosecution in King County. I have been a public defender for over 6 years, first in Memphis, TN before working in Washington. I am also a class-A qualified attorney, handling very serious cases in Superior Court.

Public defenders' current caseloads make the right to a speedy trial with effective assistance of counsel a joke, an impossibility. We do not have the capacity to prepare meaningfully for as many trials as they have assigned. As my colleagues (both those still in public defense and those who have left or are leaving due to the crushing caseloads) have described in their comments, we kill ourselves to represent our clients effectively and zealously. However, we are each individually shouldering a pressure that is a systemic problem. The systemic problem of protecting the constitutional rights of people accused of crimes belongs to the courts that oversee criminal cases and the prosecuting authorities that file criminal cases. Instead of the criminal justice system realizing the full cost of prosecution, that cost is currently placed on public defenders, and paid with our evenings, weekends, holidays, sleep, time with families, and physical and mental health. This is not just, and it is not adequate protection for Washingtonians' constitutional rights. The budgetary concerns noted by some parties writing in comments are just an objection to paying the actual cost of prosecution that has successfully been externalized to individual public defenders for decades.

The proposed caseload standards are not only more humane for the dedicated, zealous attorneys who work in public defense, they are also more just for those charged with crimes, and afford real protection of their constitutional rights. I would also argue that every member of the public or a victim of a crime who has lamented the slow crawl of a case through criminal court would also

benefit from the new caseload standards. With a realistic caseload like the proposal outlines, defense attorneys could dedicate more time to their cases, thus providing better assistance of counsel and preparing for trial more quickly. In the absence of crushing, demoralizing caseloads, the public defense community would be able to recruit and retain attorneys, and the crisis of qualified attorneys leaving public defense might subside.

I urge you to adopt the caseload standards proposed by the WSBA without reservation or qualification.

Very truly yours,

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