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Subject: FW: Comment in Support of Proposed Amendments to the Court's Standards for Indigent Defense
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From: Madeline Pfeiffer <mpfeiffer@snocopda.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 3:24 PM
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Subject: Comment in Support of Proposed Amendments to the Court's Standards for Indigent Defense

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Good afternoon,

I am writing to support the WSBA proposed amendments to the Court's Standards for indigent defense.

I am a new public defender and passionate about the work I do. I have only been working full time as a public defender for a year, but it truly feels like my calling. That said the large case loads are a serious obstacle to me being able to do my job effectively and in a sustainable way. I hope to do this work for many years to come but in order to do this I need to know that I am doing this work well. It is really difficult to defend people effectively with hundreds of clients at a time. Both my clients and I need these caseload standards greatly.

While some opponents to the case load standards bring up the difficulty of finding and training attorneys to fill these roles that transition need not occur over night. I can say as someone who not so long ago was job hunting for a position in public defense there are hundreds of law students every year who are interested in public defense but don't see a clear pathway or available training to enter the field. There is no lack of interest in public defense it will just take time to train new public defenders especially with class A qualifications.

But if I am ever going to have a caseload that is manageable and sustainable we will need to begin the transition now. The moral injury involved in public defense can be devastating. I say to myself I believe everyone deserves a vigorous defense but the truth is, with our caseloads as they are now, I cannot live up to that goal. To fix this we need a structural change in how public defense is staffed and supported and the caseloads proposed offer us that.

Thank you

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