



To the Honorable Judges of the Supreme Court,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the proposed revisions to public defense caseload standards. I'm writing to urge the Washington Supreme Court to maintain the Court's existing Standards for Indigent Defense and to reject the proposed amendments to these standards. We share the Association of Washington Cities' (AWC) concerns with the ability to meet these standards and the recommendation to explore other alternatives to ensure defendants have adequate representation that protects their constitutional rights.

Specifically:

These changes will have significant financial impacts to cities across the state. State funding only covers a small fraction of public defense costs, which means cities are required to use their general fund budgets. There are limits to increasing revenues within the general fund to absorb these financial impacts. This often means that we need to reduce funding in other critical programmatic areas of the city. If these standards are implemented, Redmond's public defense budget would increase from approximately \$500,000/year to \$800,000/year, a 60% increase. And by 2028, Redmond anticipates that our public defense budget would be over \$1.7M/year.

The proposed changes will not address workforce challenges. I agree that there are significant workforce challenges to ensuring effective and efficient delivery of indigent defense services, particularly in rural areas of the state. However, these changes as proposed will not address current challenges, because they will further exacerbate the current shortage of public defenders.

There is possible bias of the national study. The national study, on which these standards are based, does not represent the current criminal justice system in Washington State. It is not clear to what extent the national findings apply to Washington specifically.

A robust and sustainable public defense system protects the rights of the accused but also promotes fairness and equality within our communities. I believe in a system that ensures that justice is accessible to all, regardless of socioeconomic status. However, a system cannot function properly if it is under-resourced or resourced in an unsustainable way. I encourage the Court to consider AWC's recommendations before making any changes to the current standards.

- Conduct a Washington-specific study. The Court should call for a comprehensive evaluation of conditions in Washington before adopting new standards. This should also include a deeper analysis of sample Washington jurisdictions with different levels of diversity in population, geographic characteristics, and defense delivery models.



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- Establish a workgroup. The Court should establish a work group that specifically includes misdemeanor public defenders, prosecutors, and judges to evaluate the proposed changes and provide a collective recommendation to the Court.
- Limit proposal to feasible parts. The Court should adopt only the portions of the proposed standards that are feasible and achievable within current revenue and workforce limits.

Before considering any changes to the Standards for Indigent Defense, please take the time to develop and implement a pragmatic, comprehensive, and inclusive process for solving these complex challenges.

Thank you,

Angela Birney, Mayor
City of Redmond

City Hall
PO Box 97010
15670 NE 85th Street
Redmond, WA
98073-9710

From: [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)
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Subject: FW: City of Redmond's Comments to the Revised Indigent Defense Standards
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From: Brooke Buckingham <BBUCKINGHAM@redmond.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 12:46 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Cc: Amy Tsai <atsai@redmond.gov>; Yuni Yu <yyu@redmond.gov>
Subject: City of Redmond's Comments to the Revised Indigent Defense Standards

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Dear Clerk of the Supreme Court,
Please accept attached comments from the City of Redmond regarding the proposed changes to the Standards for Indigent Defense. I am sending this email on behalf of Mayor Birney.

Thank you.

Brooke Buckingham (she/her)
Human Services Manager, City of Redmond



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☎ 425-556-2416

📞 206-919-8851

✉ bbuckingham@redmond.gov

🖱 www.redmond.gov

MS:4SPL • 15670 NE 85th St • PO Box 97010 • Redmond, WA 98073-9710



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