



October 16, 2024

Washington State Supreme Court – Rules Committee  
Post Office Box 40929  
Olympia, WA 98504

Re: Opposition to WSBA's Proposed Amendments to Indigent Defense Standards

Washington State Supreme Court:

The City of Pasco respectfully requests that the Court reject the proposed amendments to the Standards for Indigent Defense in CrRLJ 3.1. While we understand the importance of protecting the rights of indigent defendants, the proposed changes will have significant negative consequences on community safety, justice for victims, and the integrity of our legal system.

Like many other cities and counties in Washington, Pasco is deeply concerned about the financial and operational burdens these amendments would impose. Pasco contracts its indigent defense services with private attorneys, allowing us to respond flexibly to fluctuating case volumes. Currently, we have no backlog and assign cases promptly, a standard that would be difficult to maintain under the proposed changes. These amendments would require a substantial increase in contracted attorneys and additional resources for support staff, investigators, and expert witnesses. The resulting strain on our budget would force us to divert resources from other essential services, with no additional state funding to offset these costs.

Furthermore, the shortage of qualified defense attorneys, particularly in smaller and mid-sized communities like Pasco, makes compliance with the proposed caseload standards nearly impossible. This will lead to delays in the administration of justice, longer pretrial detention times, and growing case backlogs, undermining the effectiveness of our criminal justice system.

Rather than amending the standards, we urge the Court to focus on developing a pipeline of well-qualified attorneys to meet the increasing demand for indigent defense. Investing in legal education, public defense training, and competitive compensation will help attract and retain attorneys who can provide the quality representation that indigent defendants deserve. This approach not only benefits defendants but strengthens the entire legal system and preserves the integrity of our courts.

The City of Pasco has reviewed and supports the public comment letters submitted by the Association of Washington Cities and the Benton County Board of Commissioners. We share their concerns about the disproportionate burdens these amendments would place on local governments, particularly smaller jurisdictions, and the unrealistic implementation timeline.



For these reasons, the City of Pasco respectfully urges the Supreme Court to reject the WSBA's proposed amendments. We stand with fellow cities and counties in asking the Court to carefully consider the detrimental impact these changes would have on local governments across Washington.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Pete Serrano".

Pete Serrano  
Mayor

**From:** [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)  
**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelyn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: City of Pasco's signed Opposition to WSBA's Proposed Amendments to Indigent Defense Standards  
**Date:** Wednesday, October 16, 2024 11:29:14 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)  
[image004.png](#)  
[image005.png](#)  
[image006.png](#)  
[Indigent Defense Standards Amendments Opposition Letter - 10-2024.pdf](#)

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**From:** Jessica Marshall <[marshallj@pasco-wa.gov](mailto:marshallj@pasco-wa.gov)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 16, 2024 11:27 AM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <[SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV](mailto:SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV)>  
**Subject:** City of Pasco's signed Opposition to WSBA's Proposed Amendments to Indigent Defense Standards

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Please see the attached signed Opposition to WSBA's Proposed Amendments to Indigent Defense Standards.

Let me know if you have any questions. Thank you,

**Jessica Marshall, CMC**  
Executive Assistant



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