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Date: Monday, October 21, 2024 10:35:20 AM

From: Mayra Ruiz <mruiz@snocopda.org>
Sent: Monday, October 21, 2024 10:00 AM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court

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Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court
Temple of Justice
Email: supreme@courts.wa.gov.

Dear Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court,

Subject: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards

I believe it is imperative to adopt the proposed 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards. I am a part of the staff at the Snohomish County Public Defender Association working closely with attorneys cases and the amount of effort and time that our public defenders put in to their clients files each day is insanely amazing. The number of calls, emails, faxes, mail, etc that comes in day after today will be very shocking to see. We notice how weighed down our attorneys can be by the end of each day. In my opinion I strongly believe that the proposed standards can really rectify a lot of the infirmities and inadequacies that the system currently has.

I highly encourage improved standards for all non-attorney staff at public defender offices and agencies: the administrative staff, investigators, social workers, technical support, and HR are all vital components in a public defense system. These non-attorney positions are indispensable parts of the process, they are not luxuries: the best trained lawyer is ill equipped to perform the roles of these professionals; furthermore, it is cost efficient to robustly fund them. By short-staffing these roles, the jurisdictions that pay for public defense services risk paying attorneys (the highest-paid employees at a defender office) to answer phones, set up computers, and do clerical tasks, etc, which while necessary to be done do not require a lawyer (not to mention that lawyers are not trained and are not skilled at filling these roles).

Most importantly, the quality of the service we give to our clients (and thereby to the

community in general) hinges on the amount of time, attention, and energy we can give to a case. Let's remember that there will always be limited hours in our days, weeks, and years, and it is a given that higher caseloads mean lower quality work for any given case or client.

As I continue to grow in my role and spend the majority part of my days serving our community/clients I know the importance of defending the wellness of my colleagues: we can only do so much before we are overwhelmed and sickened by too much work. Caseloads and conditions for public defenders have improved during the time I have been in this field, but that is not to say that things are manageable in a healthy and sustainable way.

Please consider this input and adopt the new proposed standards

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mayra Ruiz (she/her)

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