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**Subject:** FW: Support for Adopting Reduced Public Defense Caseload Standards  
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**From:** Meredith Stone <mstone@snocopda.org>  
**Sent:** Saturday, October 26, 2024 3:22 PM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Support for Adopting Reduced Public Defense Caseload Standards

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Dear Justices,

I am writing in support of the proposed caseload standards. I have been an attorney for four years and a public defender since this year.

Public defenders are some of the most passionate advocates I have encountered in my time in the legal field. As a whole, public defenders care deeply about each and every one of their clients and try to help them navigate the system and obtain the best result they can.

As a public defender, I wear many hats. I am sometimes asked to act as therapist, confidant, advocate, damage control, writer. I help my clients contact DOL to figure out what is going on with their driver's license. I contact treatment providers to see if my client will be able to engage in their programs. I am lucky that my office has resources to help with some of these things, but those individuals also only have so many hours in their day.

But I am not always able to give each case the time it deserves. I have found that Judges want cases to resolve in a short amount of time—as do I, and as do my clients. But, with current caseloads, it can be impossible to do that and provide effective assistance of counsel to my clients.

I want each of my clients to know that they are more than just a number in the system to me. They are reduced to that everywhere else, and deserve more from their advocate. They deserve to have constitutional violations litigated; they deserve to have trials; they deserve to have complete mitigation information presented at sentencings.

Also, my colleagues and I deserve to be able to give full advocacy without working 80-hour weeks, including weekends and holidays. We deserve to be able to do this job for many years without exhausting ourselves with the sheer impossibility of doing everything we should.

These new caseload standards may require more funding for public defense. Or, they may require the prosecutors' offices to employ greater scrutiny in deciding what alleged offenses to charge. That is not a bad thing. Using discretion to avoid people with mental illness and other non-criminal related challenges from entering the system will result in benefit to everyone.

Thank you for your consideration,

Meredith

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