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**Subject:** FW: Proposed changes to Public Defense Standards  
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**From:** Naomi Smith <naominoemi@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, September 17, 2024 1:55 PM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Proposed changes to Public Defense Standards

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To Whom it May Concern:

I writing in regards to the proposed changes to standards of indigent defense. I was a public defender for nearly 8 years before I left a year ago. It was one of the hardest decisions I've had to make. One factor in that decision was the caseload. I resolved simple cases rather quickly, avoided unnecessary continuances, and was regularly in trial (I had 3 sex offense trials in the 2 months leading up to the birth of my youngest child). At any given time, my caseload ranged from 45 to 63 active cases, mostly felonies. Stretching myself to be timely available to communicate with my clients, write motions, be in court, try cases, and review discovery on that many cases became unfeasible, and I worried about meeting my ethical obligations to my clients. While body cameras have significantly helped with investigations and resolving cases, most cases required reviewing between 2-4 hours of bodycam, on top of ring/home security footage which is becoming increasingly more common. My last year I lost count of how many phone records I subpoenaed and reviewed. The nature and volume of discovery has expanded and changed greatly since caseload limits were last visited. Along with sheer hours, I was very concerned about my ability to effectively represent my clients, especially those charged with crimes that could result in life sentences. To be sure, having access to a social worker and more investigators would have significantly reduced my burden and concerns.

As the Court is well aware, there is a crisis in public defense. We have fewer people graduating from law school, and public defense is a grueling job with high turnover. Addressing caseloads and support would help attract and retain attorneys. If the caseload standards are updated and reflect the realities of public defense, I would very seriously consider returning to the field.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Naomi Smith