

October 31, 2024

Washington Supreme Court
415 12th Ave. SW
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Proposed Standards for Indigent Defense

Honorable Justices of the State Supreme Court and the Court's Clerk,

On behalf of the Port of Seattle's Police Department (POSPD), I respectfully urge you to reconsider adoption of the proposal for 'Suggested Amendments to Standards for Indigent Defense' that currently sits before the Court.

The POSPD agrees with the underlying intent of the proposal:

1. Creating more sustainable working conditions for public defenders; and
2. Ensuring that every defendant has access to quality representation.

However, this proposal does not adequately protect the interests of the public and stops short of providing the additional staff support or financial resources that are necessary to ensure the basic functionality of our indigent criminal defense system.

We are primarily concerned about the downstream implications of the proposal's reduction to defense attorney caseloads. As drafted, the proposal is set to dramatically reduce the availability of existing defense attorneys and will force jurisdictions to bridge the gap between capacity and need by prosecuting fewer crimes and dismissing cases more often.

As a special purpose district that manages essential transportation infrastructure for the State, the Port relies upon partner jurisdictions to manage and effectively resolve instances of criminal activity on Port property. The inability of our partner jurisdictions to effectively manage caseloads will inevitably have a direct impact on Port operations.

These changes set up a scenario in which Courts may be obligated to dismiss more cases, creating opportunities for individuals to re-offend with impunity and without consequence. Beyond the message that this would send to offenders, we are deeply concerned about the message it sends to victims, their families, and the public at-large.

The POSPD appreciates the opportunity to voice our concerns, and we welcome any questions or requests for clarification from the Court.



Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Villa".

Michael Villa
Chief of Police
Port of Seattle

Villa.M@portseattle.org