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Subject: FW: Adopt WSBA caseload standards
Date: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 3:50:36 PM

From: Dryden, Rachel <Rachel.Dryden@kingcounty.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, October 22, 2024 3:50 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Adopt WSBA caseload standards

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I am writing to urge you to adopt the proposed WSBA's proposed caseload standards. I have been a mitigation specialist working in public defense for more than 15 years. I have seen and experienced the caseloads of public defense, and the increasing complexity of the cases and discovery. I have worked with individuals charged with crimes who have had their charges reduced, cases dismissed, and those who have been found not guilty at trial. I have also worked with clients who have plead guilty or been convicted at trial, those who have participated in treatment courts or a sentencing alternative. Finding an appropriate resolution that considers all the evidence, as well as our client's social situation and personal experience takes time and expertise. Public defense clients are vulnerable citizens, with most experiencing the crushing impact of racism, poverty, and multi-system involvement. Many of our clients experience the criminal legal system throughout their lives – watching family members victimized by crime or charged with crime, and many experience the system as both victims and defendants.

Effective public defense is one way to reduce the harm of criminal legal system involvement, and the empirically-based public defense caseload standards adopted by the WSBA recognize that effective public defense legal representation is essential and will reduce the need (and costs associated with) to transfer cases because of current attrition/retention challenges. Effective public defense is an essential component of community safety, and public defense clients are entitled to zealous and effective legal advocacy. I encourage you to adopt the standards and reduce public defender caseloads.

Thank you,
Rachel

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