

Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court  
Temple of Justice  
Email: [supreme@courts.wa.gov](mailto: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 have been staff at the Snohomish County Public Defender Association since January of 2007 starting as an investigator. I have served in that position for almost 18 years. For most of that time I have worked the felony. I have seen first-hand how weighed down my attorneys are by their case load.

The proposed standards have the potential to rectify many infirmities and inadequacies in the system as it currently exists.

We need improved standards for non-attorney staff at public defender offices and agencies: 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, 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).

Realistic and sensitive caseload standards for attorneys are also vital for a myriad of reasons: 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; there are limited hours in our days, weeks, and years, and it is simple math to show that higher caseloads mean lower quality work for any given case or client. Every client deserves 100%, by adopting the national standard we can do just that.

I feel increasingly justified in 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 my nearly two decades of work 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,  
Rhonda Fausett  
Investigator  
Snohomish County Public Defender Association  
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Everett, WA 98201

**From:** [OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK](#)  
**To:** [Martinez, Jacquelyn](#)  
**Subject:** FW: Support for 2023 National Public Defense Standards  
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**Attachments:** [Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court.docx](#)

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Greetings,

Please find attached my letter in support for National Defense Standards.

Thank you!  
Rhonda Fausett (she/her)  
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