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Subject: FW: Comment on CrR3.1, ,CrRLJ3.1, JuCR9.2 STDS
Date: Thursday, October 31, 2024 3:10:34 PM
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From: Robyn Martin <robyn.martin@co.thurston.wa.us>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 2:59 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Comment on CrR3.1, ,CrRLJ3.1, JuCR9.2 STDS

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To the Clerk of the Supreme Court,

I am writing to urge the Supreme Court to adopt the proposed changes to indigent defense standards. Whether that change occurs along the currently proposed timelines or on an extended timeline such as the one proposed by the Board of Thurston County Commissioners, the citizens of the state of Washington deserve to be represented by competent, zealous counsel that is not overburdened by unreasonable workloads.

I am a Senior Defense Attorney at Thurston County Public Defense and I am the supervising attorney for our Juvenile/Civil Unit. We handle representation of indigent clients entitled to a defense attorney on all matters outside of adult criminal defense: juvenile criminal offenses, Involuntary Treatment Act proceedings, juvenile civil matters such as truancy and At Risk Youth, dependency and termination of parental rights proceedings, and state-enforced child support matters. We often do not get the attention given to our adult criminal defense brethren and, fortunately, case load standards for some of those practice areas are already set at a more reasonable number, e.g., OPD's Parent Representation Program case standards. Our juvenile criminal defense attorneys, however, have been seriously impacted by high caseloads, particularly as the seriousness of the crimes alleged has increased in the last few years. It is not unusual for an attorney to be assigned several sex offenses along with multiple serious violent crimes, various other felonies, and misdemeanors. The youth of our community deserve as much attention and advocacy as our attorneys and office can give them, particularly in light of the expedited speedy trial right in juvenile court. Adopting the proposed case weighting and caseload standards will improve both the quality of representation as well as the lives of our attorneys.

I have been a public defender for twelve years, and in practice for nearly eighteen. Over the course

of my career, I have seen the impact of high, heavy case loads on myself and my colleagues. Thurston County Public Defense has lost many fantastic attorneys over the last several years due to the weight of chronic stress and low pay. While we all deeply value this work, for many of us it is not sustainable at the current levels. As a hiring attorney in my office, I am well aware that there is a shortage of attorneys applying for public defense jobs. The specter of unbearable caseloads and less pay than one could earn in the private sector looms over those seeking work as lawyers. We used to get dozens of applications for attorney positions; now we are lucky if we get a handful. I truly believe that proper case weighting and lower case loads will help us both retain qualified and passionate attorneys as well as encourage newer attorneys to join the field.

I love doing this work. Many of us consider it to be a calling. It pains us when our clients are underserved because we have too many cases and there are only so many hours in the day. We all appreciate your serious consideration of these changes.

Sincerely,

Robyn G. Martin *(she/her/hers)*

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"There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they're falling in." – Bishop Desmond Tutu



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