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Subject: FW: Comment on Proposed Changes to Washington Supreme Court Public Defense Standards
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From: Rosalind Arch <rosalindmariearch@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 11:17 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Comment on Proposed Changes to Washington Supreme Court Public Defense Standards

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To the Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court,

My name is Rosalind Arch and I am a social worker, domestic violence victim advocate, and a citizen of Washington state. I am currently living in Seattle, working full time at a non-profit, and attending the University of Washington's Masters of Social Work Program. I am deeply concerned about the current conditions of public defense in our state and am writing to comment on the proposed changes to the Washington Supreme Court public defense standards.

I've spent the last 6 years as a victim advocate, helping survivors of domestic violence navigate the legal system and advocating for their wishes throughout the criminal process. I spent the last 3 years as the victim advocate at the Kirkland Police Department, working alongside police officers and prosecutors. I have also worked in close proximity with the hardworking lawyers who are tasked with defending those among us who cannot afford representation, individuals who are often struggling with complex issues such as homelessness, unemployment, addiction, hunger and poverty.

Public defenders choose to act in service of others despite extremely difficult working conditions and comparatively low pay, yet we have failed to adequately staff their offices with vital support staff such as social workers, enforce reasonable caseloads, and retain experienced attorneys. These professionals are often acting simultaneously as advocates, lawyers and social workers--indeed, at times, they may be the only person left in their client's life who is unwavering in their commitment to defend them.

One might assume that my relationship to defense as a victim advocate could be characterized as adversarial, but that does not reflect my experience at all. I wholeheartedly believe that public defenders are advocates for marginalized people within a system that is particularly resistant to social change. I am too, and I know how tiring it can be. Our state's public defenders do not have the resources, time, and support they need to thrive, much less to perform the minimum requirements of their position within a reasonable work week.

The only solution to our crisis is to reduce public defender workloads. **I unequivocally support the proposed changes.**

Sincerely,
Rosalind Arch

Rosalind (Roz) Arch *Pronouns: She/Her/Hers*

Email: RosalindMarieArch@gmail.com

Phone: 517-899-7959