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Subject: FW: Writing in Support of the Public Defense Caseload Standards
Date: Thursday, October 31, 2024 4:58:38 PM

From: Shawn Plascencia <splascencia@snocopda.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 4:58 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Writing in Support of the Public Defense Caseload Standards

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Dear Honorable Justices:

I urge you to adopt the proposed public defender workload standards to ensure adequate representation for our indigent and marginalized communities.

I have been a public defender for two years. I attended Seattle University School of Law, wondering what area of law I wanted to practice. After my first year of studies, I knew I belonged in the world of public defense and wanted to become a powerful advocate for justice. I interned with the Washington Defenders Association, the Seattle Clemency Project, and the Snohomish County Public Defenders Association. I knew that the career path I was embarking on would be stressful, overwhelming, and require a lot of personal sacrifice, but nothing that could prepare me for the demanding work of being a public defender with a full caseload.

I am blessed to work for an office that has a strong sense of community and support to make the work sustainable. However, the current caseload standards must be updated to ensure adequate representation. The move to change caseload standards is not just about the workload but the intense emotional toll this job has on your mental wellbeing.

I have had friends who were amazing at their jobs quit public defense work. I have come home from work crying. I have woken up sick to my stomach. I have had dreams of how my clients face state sanctioned violence. Even with the many boundaries I have set and my many therapy sessions, this job is often soul crushing. There are not enough hours to handle my caseload and care for myself. Whenever I have thought about quitting this profession, I am grounded by Niel deGrasse Tyson's two main philosophies: "Know more about the world than I knew yesterday and lessen the suffering of others."

Many of us are in public defense for this exact reason. I am thankful and privileged to work at one of the most thoughtful and dedicated public defense offices in the state. However, the current system design harms the public, the attorneys, and the staff who represent them. Washington State is responsible for ensuring that anyone accused of a crime in the state receives effective defense. I encourage you to create a world where people accused of crimes can access attorneys with time to

represent them effectively. Justice and our constitution demand so.

Respectfully,

Shawn Plascencia

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