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To: [Martinez, Jacquelynn](#)
Subject: FW: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards
Date: Monday, October 21, 2024 2:54:18 PM

From: Sirianna Troiani <stroiani@snocopda.org>
Sent: Monday, October 21, 2024 2:51 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: RE: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards

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Honorable Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court

Temple of Justice

Email: supreme@courts.wa.gov

Dear Justices of the Washington State Supreme Court,

RE: Support for the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards

I am writing to express my utmost support for adopting the 2023 National Public Defender Workload Standards. I have dedicated most of my legal career, over 6 years, working as a public defender in Snohomish, County, Washington. In that time, I have worked for three different public defense law firms, two non-profits and one private law firm. While working as a public defense attorney at each of these law firms, I have seen so many faces, attorneys and support staff, come and go through the profession. The difficulty of the work combined with the lack of pay causes many to leave after a very short time, despite many wanting to stay. In recent years, the problem has only exacerbated with less people wanting to come into the profession and more people who have been sticking it out wanting to leave.

One of the reasons public defense work is so difficult is the lack of adequate support staff. For example, I have experienced smaller public defense law firms only staffing one investigator for all criminal cases in the office, where the case assignments were in the thousands annually. This inevitably leads to cases being delayed, shortcuts taken to fully investigate a case, and more hours worked by all staff. I have also experienced law firms being unable to hire adequate support staff, having no legal assistants available or very little if any other support staff to support attorney work. This causes attorneys to take on the extra administrative work and less time to focus on the actual legal issues in the cases. It leads to burn out, increased hours of work, and ultimately staff leaving to other sectors of the legal profession where they are compensated more and work less.

Additionally, at times, I personally have felt overwhelmed, overworked, and underpaid over the course of the last 6 years because of my caseload. Like many of my colleagues, I have several times considered switching to a different area of law. With the increase of digital discovery, just trying to review discovery for several cases can take several hours, not even including time with clients or any litigation work. Having 150 cases a year does not allow sufficient time to fulfil even the bare minimum of work necessary for competent representation. This number requires public defenders to work long hours of overtime, without adequate pay, just to be able to provide competent representation for our clients. While all my employers have worked toward improving and reducing caseload assignments for public defenders to make this work sustainable, their hands have been tied by the lack of resources and current caseload standards to make any significant impact on the issue.

Implementing the mandatory staffing requirements and reducing the annual caseload cap would directly address this ongoing crisis; The proposed standards have the potential to fix some of the issues in our broken system. I fear that not addressing the issue will only lead to a more costly crisis. Governments will continue to be subject to litigation for ineffective assistance of counsel and civil rights violations. Individuals facing loss of liberty will be subject to having some of their most basic rights violated.

I urge you to adopt the proposed standards and implement a necessary change to public defense that will ultimately benefit all stakeholders in the criminal legal system.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Sirianna Troiani – WSBA #53645

Staff Attorney

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