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From: Skyler Owen Martyn <somartyn@uw.edu>
Sent: Thursday, October 31, 2024 1:03 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: SUPPORT FOR Proposed Public Defense Standards

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Good afternoon, your honors,

Thank you for opening yourselves up to input regarding new public defense standards. Nothing compares to the act of listening closely. The proposed changes to Public Defense Standards will ensure that clients are fully heard, and the effects of such close listening will be resounding. I wish to speak specifically to the topic of trust.

My experience with public defense is limited, I confess. In the Spring of this year I worked as a Rule 9 extern for the Alaska Public Defender Agency. In my short time there, I encountered many people who were, legally speaking, guilty. What was the point of representing such people? Surely I was not there to merely insulate the State from a due process violation. Due process required me to listen, and to listen closely, not just to my clients as a whole, but to each individual client.

I am not speaking of the time necessary for legal competence, for thoroughness, and the like. I am speaking of the time it takes to get someone to trust their public defender. Currently, this trust seems to be foisted upon each client. Because they have (virtually) no choice, they ought to put their trust in the hands of the State. The coercion blurs the lines between the judge, the prosecutor, and the defender.

I am asking that you reflect on the second order effects of providing clients the time to trust their advocate. This trust will not just be individual but institutional. When a public defender connects their client with community resources, those resources will be more likely to stick. The next time that client suffers, the State will be their ally—the community will be their ally.

Thank you for your time,
Skyler Owen Martyn (he/him)

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