

Date Oct. 31, 2024

Washington State Supreme Court  
P.O. Box 40929  
Olympia, WA 98504

**Subject: Opposition to Proposed Changes in Indigent Defense Caseload Standards**

Dear Chief Justice Gonzalez and Associate Justices,

I am writing to voice my firm opposition to the proposed rule changes regarding the reduction of indigent defense caseload standards. Consequently, I urge the Court to reject this proposal.

While I fully acknowledge the importance of a strong public defense system for West Richland citizens and other jurisdictions across Washington State, I believe the proposed blanket reduction in caseload standards is not the answer. Public defense plays a crucial role in safeguarding citizens' constitutional rights within our criminal justice system. Any issues within this system should be addressed collaboratively by the State and the Court, exploring all viable solutions.

The proposed 70% reduction in caseloads presents several serious public safety concerns:

1. **Inadequate Workforce:** There is a significant shortage of public defenders to support such a drastic reduction in caseloads.
2. **Financial Limitations:** There are insufficient funds to recruit and sustain the additional workforce required and the cost will have a significant negative impact on an already struggling budget in West Richland.
3. **Overlooking Alternatives:** The proposal fails to consider other reasonable approaches to solving the problem.
4. **Neglecting Victims' Rights:** It disregards the needs and rights of crime victims.

I am confident that the adoption of this rule change will lead to a substantial increase in case dismissals, resulting in criminals returning to our communities without facing accountability. This outcome is deeply unjust and would unnecessarily burden the officers in my department.

As a dedicated public servant and advocate for victims, I am concerned that this rule will cause more harm than good. Criminal accountability is essential for ensuring justice for victims and protecting society. It also offers opportunities for treatment, recovery, reentry, and redemption—goals that are universally recognized as valuable. I believe implementing a rule that jeopardizes crime victims is unacceptable. We must seek a better solution.

I respectfully ask the Court to reject the proposed rule change and to work with stakeholders to find a more effective solution that maintains public safety.

Sincerely,



Thomas Grego  
Chief of Police  
West Richland Police Department