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Subject: FW: Opposition to Indigent Defense Attorney Case Limits—Concerns About Impact on Crime Victims and Public Safety
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From: Tiffany Attrill <tattrill@hotmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, October 30, 2024 11:32 PM
To: OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>
Subject: Opposition to Indigent Defense Attorney Case Limits—Concerns About Impact on Crime Victims and Public Safety

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October 30, 2024

Dear Honorable Justices,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed case limits for indigent defense attorneys in Washington State, as recommended by the Washington State Bar Association (WSBA). Having spent my entire career as a victim advocate in King County, I am deeply concerned that these recommendations will compromise justice for crime victims and undermine public safety.

The fundamental transaction of a crime is when one person makes the choice to behave in a manner that causes harm to another, and the harmed person is directly affected by those choices and actions. For every accused individual charged with a crime, there is a victim, a victim who seeks justice and closure. The reason we are here is because of the choices and actions of a *few*, choices and actions that affect *many*.

By implementing the proposed case limits, as suggested by the WSBA, which was made up of a relatively small group of lawyers based on a simple survey of what a sample of public defenders thought caseloads should be, we risk creating a situation where certain lower-level

crimes will go uncharged due to the limited availability of defense counsel. This would dramatically undermine accountability for criminal behavior and send a message that certain criminal offenses are not taken seriously by our justice system. Forcing prosecutors to decide which cases to file, not based on the merits of the case or evidence, but rather on the availability of defense attorneys, would result in certain criminal behaviors going uncharged and denying victims and their families the opportunity for justice. This would not only affect crime victims but would also erode trust in a justice system that communities rely on to maintain accountability.

Washington state is in this situation, in part, as it's still grappling with a backlog of cases from the COVID-19 pandemic. Coupled with recent state law changes and Supreme Court rulings, a surge in juvenile case referrals, and an overall increase in crime in Washington State, it is no surprise that defense attorneys are busy. *Everyone* who works in the criminal justice system is busy.

I have read many letters submitted to the Court and watched the testimony given during public comment on September 25, 2024. I am struck by the absence of an important voice - the voices of crime victims, survivors, and their families. While no victim or family wants to have to wait years for the criminal case to resolve, it is also not in the best interest of victims and families to not have an opportunity to even seek justice, because charges are not filed. It is my hope that this Court is not swayed by the emotional responses and threats from defense attorneys to quit, if the recommendations are not imposed. It is also my hope that the Court considers the implications that the proposed recommendations would have on crime victims, community safety and public trust in our judicial system.

I strongly urge the Court to oppose the WSBA recommendations and create a solution that ensures the rights of *all* citizens. I respectfully ask the Court to establish a task force composed of a diverse range of stakeholders—including prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges, advocates, crime victims and community members. A task force that can do a thorough analysis, explore options and propose creative solutions to present to our elected officials in the state legislature. A balanced approach that guarantees defendants receive fair representation while also upholding the rights of *all* citizens.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important matter. I appreciate your dedication to ensuring a balanced justice system that serves *all* residents of Washington State.

Sincerely,
Tiffany Attrill