

Dear Justices:

I urge you to adopt the proposed rules to amend CrR3.1/CrRLJ3.1/JuCR9.2 STDS - [Standards for Indigent Defense](#) as recommended by the Washington State Bar Association Board of Governors.

I have been engaged with public defense issues for over 17 years, as a public defender in King County for ten years, a Senior Staff Attorney with the National ACLU for three years, National Director of Legal and Policy for the Bail Project for nearly two years, and for the past two years, Attorney-in-Chief & Chief Executive Officer of the Legal Aid Society in New York City. I also serve on the Systems Builders Committee of the National Association for Public Defense. As a trial lawyer and a defender manager, I understand the complexities of both the trial practice and the administration of public defense offices.

I have remained in touch with former colleagues in King County, and I know the strain that heavy workloads cause for defender lawyers and staff and the adverse impact that they can have on clients. I know that many experienced lawyers are leaving public defense in Washington because of the heavy workload and that some law students hesitate to enter the field because of it.

During my career, I have seen major changes in the criminal practice as the volume of discovery has increased exponentially and new types of forensic evidence have emerged. A caseload that was manageable when I started no longer is. Simply reviewing discovery, including recordings from body worn cameras, car cameras, and jail phone calls, can take many hours. Collaborating with experts on cell phone tower signals and other technology can require many more hours before a lawyer even can be ready for hearings. In some jurisdictions, the mix of cases has become more complex as alternatives to traditional prosecution, particularly for misdemeanors and lower-level felonies, have been implemented.

I know the intense stress that defender lawyers are facing and have read the comments detailing their reliance on medication to get through the day. Their heartbreaking comments underscore the importance of reducing their workloads quickly.

I note that the Standards also call for increased investigation and social work resources, which are critical for effective representation.

My experience as a lawyer and as the Vice President of the Board of the Who We Are Project has documented the racial disparity in the criminal legal system. When defenders have lower caseloads and can devote the time they need to their clients, that can ameliorate the disparity.

I urge you to adopt the proposed rules as recommended by the WSBA.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Inyala Carter". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a large initial 'I' and a stylized 'C'.