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**Subject:** FW: Public comment - public defense caseload standards  
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**From:** Will Gelvick <[wgelvick@snocopda.org](mailto:wgelvick@snocopda.org)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, October 23, 2024 10:48 AM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <[SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV](mailto:SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV)>  
**Cc:** Will Gelvick <[wgelvick@gmail.com](mailto:wgelvick@gmail.com)>  
**Subject:** Public comment - public defense caseload standards

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Good morning,

My name is Will Gelvick and I have been a public defender for seven years. The below comment reflects my own views and not necessarily the views of my employer. I have worked through countless holidays and weekends and evenings and sacrificed time with my family in order to provide the minimum of effective representation to all of the clients on my caseload. I and my colleagues spent long months going into the jails and courtrooms during the peak of the COVID pandemic before any vaccine was available. A number of us got sick and worked from home despite that. When I got sick with COVID (after the vaccine came out, thankfully) I spent the first day at home desperately working despite being unable to stop shaking. This is the norm. The reason that we work during holidays and over weekends and while very sick or injured is that, given the number of cases assigned to us, we have to work under those conditions in order to meet the ethical standard of effective representation.

I have seen many colleagues suffer from burnout and secondary trauma. The pace required of us affects our mental and physical health. Over the years, I have seen many, many colleagues leave the profession. Usually this does not occur because they no longer find the work fulfilling but because they are physically or mentally unable to continue. I, myself, will only be a public defender for two more months. We love our clients and we feel privileged to represent them. My colleagues are some of the best attorneys I have ever met. Each loss of a colleague is a loss to the profession. We do not leave this work because we no longer love it or no longer wish to represent our clients – almost invariably we leave because we are simply unable to go on.

I am writing in favor of the new caseload standards because we need change. We are losing talented attorneys to burnout, depression, trauma, and pure physical exhaustion. We want to do this work. Please give us the ability to continue.

**Will Gelvick**

he/him/his

Attorney

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