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April 30, 2025

Washington Supreme Court
P.O. Box 40929
Olympia, WA 98504-0929

RE: Proposed Standards for Indigent Defense CrR 3.1, CRLJ 3.1 and JuCR 9.2 (Appellate)

Dear Clerk of the Supreme Court,

I am writing in strong support of the proposed amendments to adopt an interim appellate caseload standard of 25 cases a year until a workload study can be completed and a permanent and sustainable caseload standard can be enacted.

I am one of the newer attorneys doing appellate indigent defense in Washington. I started in October 2023. Unlike my colleagues who have done this work for decades, I cannot speak to how things have changed in recent years. But it does not take much time in this role to see that the caseload now is untenable. There is simply more work to do than there is time to do it. Appellate defenders are forced to make substantial sacrifices to their personal lives, the quality of their representation, or both. It is not fair to us and it is even less fair to our clients.

The heavy caseload also means there is also little time available to train newer attorneys such as myself. Newer attorneys often must rely on the experience and knowledge of our colleagues. It is hard for me to continually ask people who are already working evenings and weekends on their own cases to also spend time reading my briefs or mooting me for oral arguments. I take my duty of competence seriously and I am lucky to have colleagues who are generous with their time despite these difficult circumstances, but this is a structural problem that will exist as long as the caseload is so demanding.

I hope to do appellate defense work for the rest of my career. I feel incredibly privileged to do work that I believe in. It is an honor to serve the poor and marginalized, and to play this vital role in ensuring that a person's constitutional rights are protected. I understand that this will never be an easy job, and I accept that. But the demands of this job should not cost attorneys any semblance of work-life balance and they should not cost our clients the time and attention that their cases deserve. I urge this Court to adopt the interim caseload standards as an important first step towards a more just appellate public defense system in Washington.

Thank you for your consideration,


Maya Ramakrishnan

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Hello,

Please find attached my comments in support of the proposed amendments to CrR 3.1, CrRLJ 3.2, and JuCR 9.2 regarding appellate caseload standards for indigent defense.

Thank you,

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