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Hi,

I am writing to express my strong support for lowering the caseload standards for family defense attorneys representing indigent parents in dependency cases. I have practiced dependency family defense since 2018 but recently transitioned my practice focus to NGRI defense instead, in large part due to the absolutely unmanageable caseload standards currently in place for family defense work.

Dependency work involves some of the highest stakes anyone involved in the legal system can ever face, earning termination of parental rights the description of the civil death penalty. As the caseloads currently stand, it is impossible to meet the ethical requirements under the RPCs and provide adequate assistance of counsel for indigent parents. Attorneys are forced to prioritize cases based on emergency issues daily. This leads to attorneys being unable to engage in the very basics of going through discovery records and engaging in depositions and other investigative portions of cases, which ultimately means parents are not receiving appropriate representation.

While I loved the work in dependency, the toll it takes on an attorney to just attempt to provide adequate advocacy for clients is untenable. I have seen judges berate attorneys for failing to keep up with their casework on other cases while they were in the middle of trials. I have seen attorneys break down in tears from the overwhelming amount of work they have on their plate after staying up all night multiple nights in a row working. I have seen highly skilled and qualified attorneys leave this important work because it is not possible to do under the current standards. And I have seen the state struggle to fill vacant positions in family defense because of the ridiculous caseloads in dependency cases.

Families deserve ethical, competent, skilled, and dedicated attorneys to represent them in this highly specialized and difficult area of law. My personal opinion is that even the proposed standards are still too high at the end of the day to meet these goals, but it is at least a starting point.

Thank you for your consideration to this incredibly important needed change for families in Washington.

Best,

**Brittany M. Tri**

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