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**From:** Gabriel Cisneros-Lassey <cisne2609@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 22, 2025 1:55 PM  
**To:** OFFICE RECEPTIONIST, CLERK <SUPREME@COURTS.WA.GOV>  
**Subject:** Supporting Parent Defense Standards

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To the Washington State Supreme Court:

As a Parent Lived Expert and member of the Washington State Parent Ally Committee (WSPAC), I write in strong support of the proposed amendments to CrR 3.1 / CrRLJ 3.1 / JuCR 9.2, which establish meaningful caseload limits and professional standards for attorneys representing parents in family defense matters.

We are parents with lived experience in the child welfare system. Many of us have had our families separated, our rights challenged, and our lives judged by systems that too often fail to see our full humanity. Through this lens, we know what makes the biggest difference in whether a family is reunited—or permanently torn apart.

A strong, well-supported parent defense attorney can change everything.

Why These Standards Matter to Us

1. **Time = Justice.** When attorneys carry too many cases, parents become names on a docket—not human beings with a story, a plan, and a future. We need defenders who have the time to know us, fight for us, and stand beside us. These standards make that possible.
2. **Children Suffer When Attorneys Are Overloaded.** Every delay, every missed opportunity, every underprepared hearing puts reunification further out of reach. Our children feel those consequences—sometimes for the rest of their lives. We need a system that treats parent representation as urgent and vital, not optional or underfunded.
3. **Parents Deserve the Same Constitutional Rights as Criminal Defendants.** In some ways, the stakes in dependency court are even higher—because the risk isn't just freedom lost, but **family lost**. These standards recognize the seriousness of that risk and the level of advocacy required to meet it.

4. **Defenders are Partners in Our Recovery and Growth.** Many of us made mistakes. But with the right support, we turned our lives around. The defenders who helped us weren't just lawyers—they were advocates, coaches, protectors, and believers. Standards like these ensure attorneys have the capacity to show up that way for the next parent who walks through the door.
5. **Caseload Limits Protect Families AND Attorneys.** High turnover and burnout among defenders hurt everyone. We support standards that protect the mental health and sustainability of the people representing us. When defenders are well, they can fight harder—for us and for justice.
6. **This Rule is a Step Toward Equity.** Families of color and poor families are disproportionately separated by the child welfare system. Ensuring every parent gets high-quality representation is a concrete way to fight racial injustice and economic inequality.

We are not policy experts. We are parents who have lived this system. And we can tell you plainly: **without strong public defense, there is no balance, no fairness, and no justice in child welfare.**

We urge the Court to adopt these standards—not as a gesture, but as a commitment to families like ours. Our lives, our children, and our futures depend on it.

Sincerely,

**Gabe Cisneros-Lassey**  
**Dad**