

State of
Washington
House of
Representatives



March 13, 2014

Joanne Moore, Director
Washington State Office of Public Defense
711 Capitol Way S., Ste. 106
P.O. Box 40957
Olympia, WA 98504-0957

RE: House Judiciary Committee Request for Misdemeanor Public Defense Review

Dear Ms. Moore:

As you know, many Washington cities and counties believe they face significant new costs for public defense services, particularly with the January 2015 implementation of misdemeanor attorney caseload standards required by the Supreme Court's Standards for Indigent Defense. This past legislative session the House Judiciary Committee heard compelling testimony that local governments need new revenue authority to adequately fund public defense in the misdemeanor courts. We also heard examples of some intriguing local reforms that are expected to mitigate impacts on public defense.

The Judiciary Committee would like to be able to consider a more comprehensive statewide analysis of these issues in the 2015 legislative session. To that end, we respectfully request that the Office of Public Defense (OPD) convene an interim work group to examine the cost of misdemeanor public defense in Washington's courts of limited jurisdiction. Recognizing the short time frame involved, we recommend a relatively small core work group consisting of at least two representatives each of county and city associations, misdemeanor judges, public defenders, and prosecutors. We expect there are others who will be very interested in the topic and hope you will structure your discussions in a way that other voices will be included in the dialogue.

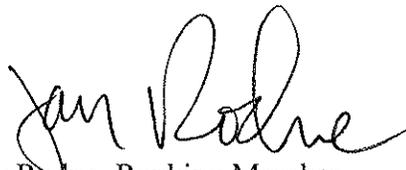
In addition to an inventory of current public defense costs in the misdemeanor courts and revenue generated by these courts, we would like your analysis to also address potential impacts associated with implementing the Standards for Indigent Defense, including additional costs associated with misdemeanor attorney caseload standards as well as best practices for alternative case resolution that may mitigate costs. To the extent practicable, it would be helpful to see an individualized analysis for each misdemeanor court in the state.

We welcome periodic updates on your progress and look forward to receiving a report of your findings in time for our fall Committee Assembly meeting, which is not yet scheduled but typically occurs in late November or early December.

Best regards,



Laurie Jenkins, Chair,
House Judiciary Committee



Jay Roane, Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee

cc: Association of Washington Cities
Washington State Association of Counties
District and Municipal Judges Association
Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys
Washington Defender Association