

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Proclamation: Study Needed to Learn More about Inefficiencies and Inequities Created by Local Court Rules, Funding, and Technology

WHEREAS, WSBA leaders have for years received direct feedback from members across the state who want the WSBA to take action to address inefficiencies and inequities resulting from disparate local court rules, funding, and technology in Washington state;

WHEREAS, these testimonies relay occurrences of harm to Washingtonians seeking legal help who encounter barriers navigating disparate local court rules or incur increased costs for legal practitioners to navigate these systems;

WHEREAS, these testimonies relay occurrences of harm to specific groups of Washingtonians, such as those living in rural areas or in poverty, who may be inequitably impacted by courts' disparate adoption of technology to create remote filing, record sharing, processes, procedures, and hearings;

WHEREAS, these testimonies relay occurrences of harm to Washingtonians seeking legal help because disparate local rules and adoption of technology make it difficult for lawyers—including those engaging in pro bono and legal aid work—to practice in multiple jurisdictions, exacerbating Washington's "legal deserts;"

WHEREAS, these testimonies relay occurrences of harm to Washingtonians seeking legal help, who may encounter inequitable outcomes due to disparate funding levels and standards from jurisdiction to jurisdiction;

WHEREAS, WSBA leaders seek to understand and support city and county leaders, who have expressed significant and urgent concerns with their ability to fund and implement the WSBA's new Standards for Indigent Defense, which derive from a Constitutional mandate;

WHEREAS, WSBA leaders recognize that disparate funding between the state's court systems can cause inequitable and inconsistent means for jurisdictions to implement and uphold best legal practices and standards, in general;

WHEREAS, potential solutions to these issues warrant further study, including data-collection from WSBA members to better understand the impact to the public and profession of disparate local rules, technology, and funding between Washington's court systems;

WHEREAS, one of the express purposes of the WSBA is to promote an effective legal system, accessible to all, and to serve as a statewide voice to the public and to the branches of government on matters relating to the legal profession;

WHEREAS, through its stated purpose, the WSBA is uniquely suited to convene stakeholders statewide and promote effective solutions to benefit the legal profession, the justice system, and the public;

NOW, THEREFORE, we, the WSBA Board of Governors, advocate for a comprehensive approach to study and understand the inefficiencies and inequities created by local court rules, technology, and funding, which will include convening and meaningfully engaging many stakeholders across Washington state, especially those in rural areas; and we stand ready to support solutions resulting from the study.



Sunitha Anjilvel, President, WSBA Board of Governors