
SENATE JOINT MEMORIAL 8006

State of Washington

69th Legislature

2025 Regular Session

By Senator Torres

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1 TO THE HONORABLE CHIEF JUSTICE AND MEMBERS OF THE WASHINGTON
2 STATE SUPREME COURT:

3 We, your Memorialists, the Senate and House of Representatives of
4 the State of Washington, in legislative session assembled,
5 respectfully represent and petition as follows:

6 WHEREAS, There is currently a noted shortage of attorneys
7 available to fill roles in public defense and prosecution in
8 Washington state, as confirmed by Legislative testimony in numerous
9 hearings, constituent appeals, and as widely reported in the press
10 throughout 2024; and

11 WHEREAS, The shortage of available attorneys is felt in many
12 other areas by low and moderate-income Washingtonians, as confirmed
13 by the Civil Legal Needs Studies from 2003 and 2015, which found that
14 these Washingtonians frequently cannot access or afford legal
15 services; and

16 WHEREAS, Experience in Washington State proves that a portion of
17 this access problem can be ameliorated safely and with adequate
18 client protections and controls by creation of opportunities for
19 expansion of the authorized practice of law; and

20 WHEREAS, Beginning in 2012, this Court established a limited
21 license legal technician program in Washington State to authorize
22 certain persons to render limited legal assistance or advice in
23 approved practice areas of law, and saw the first class of limited

1 license legal technician candidates graduate in 2014 with new limited
2 license legal technicians continuing to be eligible for licensure
3 until 2023, provided the candidates had started their educational
4 requirements by June 4, 2020; and

5 WHEREAS, A study by the Public Welfare Foundation in 2017 found
6 that limited license legal technicians in Washington provide
7 significant help in creating access to justice; and

8 WHEREAS, Studies by groups such as the Stanford Center on the
9 Legal Profession, Arkansas Law Review, and ABA Standing Committee on
10 Paralegals have written favorable analyses on Washington State's
11 first in the nation limited license legal technician program, noting
12 that it has served as a model inspiring similar programs in states
13 such as Arizona, Minnesota, Oregon, and Utah; and

14 WHEREAS, In April and June of 2020, the limited license legal
15 technician board submitted reports to the Court describing the
16 successes experienced by the program and requesting its continuance
17 and expansion to the new practice areas of administrative law and
18 eviction and debt assistance; and

19 WHEREAS, The Court's decision to instead sunset the limited
20 license legal technician program, issued on June 5, 2020, over a
21 vigorous dissent by Justice Madsen, did not anticipate the acuity of
22 the current crisis in legal representation for low and moderate-
23 income Washingtonians;

24 NOW, THEREFORE, Your Memorialists respectfully ask the Chief
25 Justice and members of the Court to:

26 (1) Reverse the sunset of the limited license legal technician
27 program and reinstate issuance of new licenses to qualified
28 candidates;

29 (2) Expand the limited license legal technician program within
30 one year to include authorization for a properly trained limited
31 license legal technician to provide assistance to clients at
32 administrative hearings and to provide eviction and debt assistance,
33 consonant with the 2020 recommendations of the limited license legal
34 technician board; and

35 (3) Form a work group to consider how limited license legal
36 technicians can be used to help meet the needs of individuals charged
37 with offenses in courts of limited jurisdiction, and to instruct that
38 work group to deliver recommendations for expansion of the program
39 into this area within two years.

1 BE IT RESOLVED, That copies of this Memorial be immediately
2 transmitted to the Honorable Chief Justice and members of the
3 Washington State Supreme Court.

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