

July 14, 2020

Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye
The Honorable Ming Chin
The Honorable Carol Corrigan
The Honorable Goodwin Liu
The Honorable Mariano-Florentino Cuéllar
The Honorable Leondra Kruger
The Honorable Joshua Groban
Supreme Court of California
350 McAllister Street
San Francisco, CA 94107

Re: 2020 California Law School Graduates

Dear Chief Justice and Associate Justices of the Supreme Court of California:

We write on behalf of the California Lawyers Association to follow up on our letter of April 6, 2020, encouraging the State Bar and the Supreme Court to explore options to facilitate the prompt entry into practice of 2020 law school graduates, and to note our interest in the proposal from California law schools deans, law students, and others in support of a “Diploma Privilege” for 2020 California law school graduates.

As the statewide, voluntary bar association for all California attorneys, including students, newly admitted professionals and those awaiting admission, we write to offer our support and perspective with respect to options you may consider to facilitate the prompt entry into practice of 2020 law school graduates. We recognize and appreciate the extraordinary efforts the State Bar and Supreme Court have made and continue to make to offer a fall bar exam and to pursue other options to facilitate the ability to practice for the law school graduating class of 2020. We understand how truly extraordinary this moment in history is and how it may not be possible to safely and fairly administer the bar exam to everyone who is eligible to sit for the test in the fall. We also recognize that studying for and taking the bar exam is a stressful experience under the best of circumstances and are sympathetic that these are uniquely difficult times. We further acknowledge the disparate effects these challenging times have had on many diverse and first-generation graduates, many of whom have been impacted by both COVID-19 and racial inequities.

We have followed these issues and acknowledge that those tasked with the ultimate decisions must strike the right balance among sub-optimum choices. We believe that any solution must require 2020 law school graduates to eventually pass the California bar exam in some reasonable time period and until such time, any provisional licensure arrangement must include the supervision of law school graduates by licensed attorneys, and disclosure of any provisional status as a matter of public protection. We note that this would be analogous to provisions in the State Bar Rules and California Rules of Court, rule 9.42, governing law school students and graduates under the Practical Training of Law Students Program and in essence is the same as the request contained in the July 9, 2020 letter from Assemblymembers Mark Stone and Lorena Gonzalez to the Supreme Court, with the exception of the disclosure requirement which we would recommend. To be clear, the California Lawyers Association supports reasonable accommodations for the 2020 law school graduates seeking admission to practice law in California, but opposes any arrangement that would forever exempt law school graduates from the requirement that they pass the California bar exam. As you deliberate over how to simultaneously protect the public and not further exacerbate the stresses and challenges recent graduates face in this unparalleled historic moment, CLA stands ready to assist in any way we can.

Sincerely,



Ona Alston Dosunmu
C.E.O. & Executive Director



Emilio Varanini
President



Howard F. Wilkins III
Chair

cc: Alan Steinbrecher
Donna Hershkowitz