

July 17, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Letitia James
Attorney General of New York State
The Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable Andrea Stewart-Cousins
Majority Leader and Temporary President of the New York State Senate
188 State Street, LOB 907
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the New York State Assembly
188 State Street, LOB Room 932
Albany, NY 12248

The Honorable Janet DiFiore
Chief Judge of the New York State Court of Appeals
20 Eagle Street
Albany, NY 12207

Dear Governor Cuomo, Attorney General James, Majority Leader Stewart-Cousins,
Speaker Heastie, and Chief Judge DiFiore,

Yesterday, the Court of Appeals announced that it had cancelled the in-person September bar exam, leaving our graduates with grave doubt and anxiety as to the nature and timing of their opportunity for admission to the bar and ability to enter the profession.

We, the deans of New York's 15 law schools, write to urge that New York adopt a diploma privilege in the swiftest way possible. We know the Court is considering this among other options, and we know that there is pending legislation to this effect in the Legislature. Immediate action is essential.

We have repeatedly advocated on behalf of our graduates before the Court of Appeals regarding the timing and format of the bar exam, and alternatives thereto, in light of a variety of public health and logistical concerns. While we support the adoption of an

online examination as an option, the excessive delay in making a final determination on such an exam places an undue burden on our graduates who have been studying intensively for licensure for the past two months in the midst of extreme public health concerns and hardship.

The State of New York currently has no clear plan to facilitate the admission to the bar of thousands of our recent graduates. These graduates now are in a state of limbo, with a profound level of uncertainty and anxiety that surrounds their futures and economic stability as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. Indeed, as you can imagine, in order to study for the exam, many of them have quit jobs, taken leaves of absence, and borrowed money to pay for housing and food. Most of these graduates currently, or will imminently, face significant student loan repayment obligations, and need to be licensed to either start employment, keep it, or find it.

Thank you for your support.

Respectfully,

Alicia Ouellette
President and Dean, Professor of Law
Albany Law School

Michael T. Cahill
President, Joseph Crea Dean & Professor of Law
Brooklyn Law School

Aviva Abramovsky
Dean and Professor of Law
University at Buffalo School of Law

Melanie Leslie
Dean and Samuel Belkin Professor of Law
Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law

Gillian Lester
Dean and the Lucy G. Moses Professor of Law
Columbia Law School

Mary Lu Bilek
Dean and Professor of Law
CUNY School of Law

Eduardo Peñalver
Allan R. Tessler Dean and Professor of Law
Cornell Law School

Matthew Diller
Dean and Paul Fuller Professor of Law
Fordham University School of Law

Judge A. Gail Prudenti
Dean and Executive Director of the Center for Children, Families and the Law
Maurice A. Deane School of Law at Hofstra University

Anthony W. Crowell
Dean and President, Professor of Law
New York Law School

Trevor W. Morrison
Dean and Eric M. and Laurie B. Roth Professor of Law
New York University School of Law

Horace Anderson, Jr.
Dean and Professor of Law
Elisabeth Haub School of Law at Pace University

Michael A. Simons
Dean and John V. Brennan Professor of Law & Ethics
St. John's University School of Law

Craig M. Boise
Dean and Professor of Law
Syracuse University College of Law

Elena B. Langan
Dean and Professor of Law
Touro Law Center

Cc: The Honorable Michael J. Garcia
Associate Judge, New York State Court of Appeals

The Honorable Howard Levine
Associate Judge (Retired), New York State Court of Appeals

Diane Bosse
Chair, New York State Board of Law Examiners

Scott M. Karson
President, New York State Bar Association

Sheila S. Boston
President, New York City Bar Association