



February 10, 2017

John W. McConnell, Esq.
Counsel
Office of Court Administration
25 Beaver Street
11th floor
New York, NY 10004

Re: Diversity & Inclusion CLE
requirement for New York State
attorneys

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Dear Mr. McConnell:

The Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission strongly supports the proposal that all licensing and regulatory authorities requiring mandatory continuing legal education be required to include, as a separate credit, programs regarding diversity and inclusion in the legal profession and programs regarding the elimination of bias (“D&I CLE”).

It is important that D&I CLE be required, to ensure that attorneys are made aware of issues that they may not otherwise be exposed to or may not fully understand and appreciate. This requirement would further the pursuit of justice. Such a CLE could raise awareness of particular biases and also allow an opportunity to understand the wide myriad of different individuals not only in the New York state, but worldwide. This proposal can result in a breakthrough in equality and justice, eventually leading to increased diversity in law firms, the judiciary and the entire legal profession.

Implicit biases are the most insidious since one is often unaware of how it affects our behavior, especially towards others. However, such a CLE program has the potential to elevate understanding and



promote tolerance. The D&I CLE requirement may become the catalyst that paves the way to a fair, tolerant and just experience for future generations.

The Commission also strongly supports that religion be included in the definition of diversity. Throughout history, diverse religious beliefs have been an area of intolerance and requires education.

The Commission has sponsored programs on implicit bias for administrative judges, court security and other managerial positions within the courts. We also featured an implicit bias session at our conference in June 2015, *Uniting Communities: Justice for All*, and we will feature an implicit bias session at our conference in June 2017 at Fordham Law School.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely Yours,


Hon. Richard B. Lowe III
Commission Chair