



January 31, 2017

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

Dear Counsel McConnell:

The Board of Directors of Practicing Attorneys for Law Students, Inc. (PALS) writes to express our strong support of amending the New York State Continuing Legal Education Board's (the "Board") mandatory continuing legal education (CLE) requirement for attorneys in the State of New York (22 NYCRR § 1500) that would impose a one-credit requirement CLE for experienced attorneys (admitted to the New York Bar for more than two years) addressing the subject of diversity, inclusion and the elimination of bias.

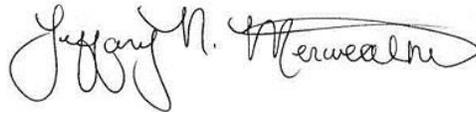
For more than 30 years, PALS has provided mentoring, career guidance, professional and skill development to minority law students in the State of New York. The mentor program serves more than 300 law students each year, and alumni of the program have gone on to pursue successful careers in law firms, corporations, non-profits and other legal employers.

However, the legal profession remains one of the least diverse professions in the country. According to the New York City Bar Association 2015 Diversity Benchmarking Report, in signatory law firms, minority attorneys represent only 18.1% of the legal profession, and minority men and women make up only 8% of partners. Of all partners at signatory firms, Black/African American women and Hispanic/Latina women make up 0.7% and 0.5%, respectively. These data points speak volumes to the need to enhance efforts to retain and promote minority attorneys.

Moreover, implicit bias remains a challenge to increasing the number of minority and women attorneys who elevate to leadership in their respective institutions. We believe that a mandatory CLE that educates all attorneys on diversity, inclusion and the elimination of bias, will be an impactful way to reverse these negative data trends and maintain the justice and equality that our profession upholds. Passage of this rule will help lawyers to better understand and enhance their interactions with clients, business partners, court and other public officials, opposing counsel, jurors and colleagues, all who represent a diverse community.

As leaders in the profession, we encourage New York State to join California and Minnesota and set the standard for all remaining states by enacting a similar program. PALS fully supports the proposed amendment to 22 NYCRR § 1500 imposing a mandatory one-credit CLE requirement addressing the subject of diversity, inclusion and the elimination of bias. This CLE requirement is a critical element in moving the needle forward, and we strongly encourage the Board to approve this amendment.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tiffany N. Meriweather". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Tiffany N. Meriweather, Esq
PALS Chairperson