

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