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April 9, 2020

Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye
California Supreme Court
350 McAllister St Ste 1295
San Francisco, CA 94102

Committee of Bar Examiners
California State Bar
Office of Admissions
180 Howard Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

Dear Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Associate Justices of the Court, and members of the Committee of Bar Examiners (CBE):

On behalf of the Bar Association of San Francisco (“BASF”) and its hundreds of law student members, we write regarding the impact that the ongoing COVID-19 crisis will have on the July 2020 California Bar Examination. COVID-19 and its effect on the world and legal industry is unprecedented and unpredictable. However, it is clear that should California follow other states like New York and Massachusetts in postponing the July 2020 Bar Examination, the effect on the law school Class of 2020 and others who would take the examination will be serious and immediate. Law students spend three years obtaining a Juris Doctorate, and many incur significant amounts of debt, with the goal of being able to enter the practice of law. The delay in being able to practice affects their ability to find and retain employment, pay off their student loans and support themselves and their family, represent clients effectively, and obtain skills necessary to becoming a thriving member of the legal community.

Given what is at stake, BASF encourages thoughtful consideration of the impact the delay in the July 2020 Bar Examination will have on law school graduates and the legal profession. In times like these, well-trained and capable attorneys are needed more than ever to provide effective representation. A shortage in new lawyers will have an especially adverse impact on certain areas of law, such as criminal law, landlord/tenant, and non-profits. In this crisis, it is the disenfranchised that will suffer the most without lawyers willing and able to represent them.

In addition, BASF asks that time be taken to understand and account for the increased impact a delay of the July 2020 Bar Examination would have on communities underrepresented in the legal profession, for example racial/ethnic minorities, individuals from families of lower socioeconomic status, and first generational professionals. The diversity of our legal profession is important to



THE BAR ASSOCIATION OF
SAN FRANCISCO

the practice of law, and such a delay is more likely to impact these diverse communities.

Therefore, BASF encourages working in conjunction with all affected parties – law students, law schools, legal professionals, and community members – to ensure all voices are being heard and considered in crafting a response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Sincerely,

Stuart Plunkett
President, The Bar Association of San Francisco