



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
Supreme Court of New Jersey
Richard J. Hughes Justice Complex
P.O. Box 970
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0970

Dear Chief Justice Rabner:

On behalf of myself and the entire New Jersey State Bar Association Executive Committee, thank you for granting us the opportunity to meet with the Court and Judge Grant earlier this month. We are grateful for the annual audience that allows us to discuss issues facing the profession and the Judiciary in a frank and open way. In reflecting on this year's meeting, I believe it was the most fruitful conversation that I have participated in, and I am confident that the members of the New Jersey State Bar Association, and entire legal profession, will benefit as a result of the collaboration between the organized bar and Judiciary on areas of mutual concern. Please extend our profound gratitude to all of the Justices and Judge Grant.

In follow-up to that conversation, please find enclosed an excerpt of the Report and Recommendations on Improving the Legal Profession for Lawyers from the Putting Lawyers First Task Force. As you may recall, this effort was central to my term as president and represents hundreds of hours of work by dedicated volunteers from across the Association who shared their time and expertise all with the aim of helping lift up the profession.

Key to the report are the findings of a survey conducted last fall that gauged the well-being of the legal profession, confirming that New Jersey is no exception to the national wellness crisis facing attorneys. You will find included an extensive discussion about the prevalence of depression, burnout, suicidal ideation, problem drinking, and isolation. As a result of the findings, we present a recommendation to centralize and coordinate well-being efforts among the Judiciary, organized bar and law firms to address the needs of our colleagues through education, training, pipeline programs and more. In addition, the recommendations include a request to remove Question 12B from the New Jersey Character and Fitness, which was the subject of a previous letter to the Court.

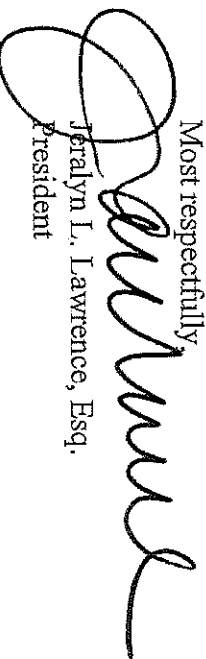
An area of study of additional importance examined the ethics and fee arbitration systems. With the goal of providing the Court with information regarding the current functioning of the disciplinary and fee arbitration systems, our Working Group on Ethics and Fee Arbitration collected information

from a wide array of individuals who have experience with the system. The report highlights the many successful aspects of the system and examined areas of concern where improvements could be realized to benefit the attorneys and members of the public who come into contact with the systems. Our key request is to establish a Commission, with wide representation, to conduct a comprehensive study of both the ethics system and fee arbitration system to address the issues raised in this report including the grievance process, encouraging volunteers, the random audit system and diversionary programs.

In addition to these highlighted recommendations, please know that the work to support our profession is ongoing. The Putting Lawyers Task Force examined several other important issues. Those included: malpractice concerns; ways to help and support solo and small-firm attorneys as well as newly admitted attorneys and those transitioning to retirement; dealing ethically with online reviews; successfully being relieved as counsel; and ensuring that attorneys are paid for their services. The NJSBA will work with its sections and committees to further study these areas, and we look forward to sharing our findings with the Court in the future.

We stand ready to discuss these issues with you and would be pleased to provide any additional information referenced in the report that was not included for the sake of expediency.

Most respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Lawrence", written over the typed name and title.

Jeralyn L. Lawrence, Esq.
President

Cc: Hon. Glenn A. Grant, J.A.D., Administrative Director of the Courts

Heather Joy Baker, Clerk, Supreme Court of New Jersey

Steven Bonville, Chief of Staff, Administrative Office of the Courts

Tim McGoughran, Esq., NJSBA President-Elect