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On behalf of the 70,000 members of the New York State Bar Association (NYSBA), I thank you for your participation in our special meeting of the Committee on Legal Education and the Bar Exam. I admire your advocacy for the Class of 2020, which is indeed facing unprecedented challenges and circumstances as a result of the ongoing pandemic. We did not agree on everything, but we engaged in a civil and productive dialogue – the fundamental underpinning and hallmark of the legal profession.

While NYSBA, as you know, is the largest voluntary state bar association in the country, it is not responsible for admitting attorneys to the bar. That duty belongs to the Court of Appeals and its subsidiary, the Board of Law Examiners (BOLE), and I am pleased that John McAlary, executive director of the BOLE, was also able to participate and to address some of your concerns. McAlary has pledged to use the resources of his office to help applicants who need specific accommodations due to disabilities, health issues or other challenges. Our Committee on Legal Education and the Bar Exam also stands ready to listen to any ways we can help make the Oct. 5 and 6 remote bar exam as safe and secure as possible.

The coronavirus has created significant hardships for your class but has also upended the legal profession as a whole. Lawyers at all stages of their careers are suffering. They have had to close offices, lay off attorneys and support staff and cut salaries. Some have struggled to pay rent and taxes. NYSBA has worked throughout this unprecedented public health crisis to support its members by providing them with key resources and information, and also has provided pro bono services to the public at large – particularly in the areas of unemployment benefits and housing.

These efforts have also included measures to support you – the future of our profession – including NYSBA's backing of supervised practice orders to enhance employment opportunities for students awaiting admission. We also encouraged legal aid organizations to meet the increased need of under-represented groups by hiring unbarred graduates to work under those orders.

As I said during our discussion, I feel very strongly that the chaos created by the virus cannot be allowed to undermine the vital protections of the public interest provided by ensuring that lawyers licensed in New York are competent to serve. This is particularly important for clients who are members of vulnerable communities and have little or no familiarity with the reputations

of lawyers and law firms. These clients rely on the license as proof of an attorney's competence and ability to represent them fully and fairly.

This is a difficult moment in our collective history, and one that we need to work together to weather without letting disagreements form chasms of animosity. We pledge to continue our advocacy on your behalf, arguing for the deferment of student loan interest and fostering a profession that prioritizes attorney well-being. We hope you will join our association's ranks and continue to make your voices heard. Your energy, ideas and fresh perspective are crucial to cementing the strong future of our profession.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott M. Karson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Scott M. Karson

cc: Hon. Alan Scheinkman
Mr. John McAlary