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PCBA STATEMENT CONDEMNING SYSTEMIC DISCRIMINATION IN ALL FORMS

The Placer County Bar Association believes that no organization of lawyers can long survive unless its primary objective is to protect the public. We are committed in our spirit of hope and in action to pursue equal justice for all. We stand in solidarity as leaders of our legal community to further this objective.

A. We Condemn Discrimination in All Forms.

The Placer County Bar Association unequivocally condemns discrimination in all forms, whether based on race, socio-economic status, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, appearance, or any other form of bias. We acknowledge the pain, trauma, anger, and frustration that has resulted from tragedies experienced by the Black community, communities of color, and other groups of individuals based on their ethnicity, religious beliefs, culture, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or perceived disabilities. We acknowledge that discrimination in many forms persists in our society, and that our fellow human beings continue to experience harm that has been compounded by the 2020 pandemic.

Our courts are an integral part of the justice system and have an essential role in ensuring justice for all. Access to courts is access to justice. In standing firm against racism, oppression, and bias, we must be intentional in our efforts, thoughts, and actions about how we provide access to justice for all members of our community. Examining our professional approach, process, and environments is one of the first steps in shining a light on conscious and unconscious bias in the legal system.

We stand firm against racism and oppression in all its forms. We shall be intentional in our efforts to move in a different direction. We shall examine our individual thoughts and beliefs, as well as our professional approaches, processes, and environments to address the impact of our own biases. We shall examine, anew, what we are doing, or failing to do, to root out conscious and unconscious bias in our legal system.

As Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote from a Birmingham jail,

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

B. We Are Committed to Creating Change.

During this time of converging crises, with an onslaught of legal needs arising from the harsh reality that discrimination and inequity still persist today, we ask our members to recall the Lawyer's Oath - an oath that requires us to remember and remedy, to the best of our ability, the causes of the defenseless and oppressed. We must actively seek out those who have suffered and are suffering at the hands of systemic inequities, prejudice, and police brutality, to learn how we can eliminate these vestiges of the past.

Consistent with our mission, we are committed to enhancing our community through concerted efforts to create a new normal in which we eliminate injustice regardless of human differences. As we look for ways to bring that change, we commit to do the following:

- Reflect, listen, examine, study, question, understand, accept, speak out, lead, and thank those who do;
- Address not only our own bias and prejudice, but also systemic and institutional racism;
- Work to ensure that our courts are open and accessible to all Californians; particularly communities that have been historically marginalized and oppressed;
- Work to ensure that our system of justice, including our criminal justice system, is fair and provides equal justice to all, and collaborate with public safety stakeholders to that end; and
- Continue to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, including in our judicial education and community outreach and engagement.

Identifying actions that we can take is, of course, easier than taking them. But taking action is imperative.

C. We Encourage Action.

Every moment is a potential call to action for justice. In times of crisis, the call sounds clearest. PCBA can help you answer that call. Please consider taking the following actions:

- Adopt Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plans, and act on them;
- Volunteer your pro bono services in all legal areas to those in need (email placerbar.org@gmail.com for opportunities);

- Embrace the State Bar of California's efforts for diversity, inclusion and access to justice (see <http://www.calbar.ca.gov/About-Us/Our-Mission/Promoting-Inclusion-and-Diversity>);
- Participate with or contribute to *The Last Prisoner Project* (www.lastprisonerproject.org) or to a justice group of your choice;
- Help people with legal needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Share your ideas about additional actions lawyers can take, and join in our efforts to make the changes so desperately required (email placerbar.org@gmail.com for more information).

D. CONCLUSION

The Placer County Bar Association stands in solidarity with the hundreds of bar associations, and other social and legal organizations across the country dedicated to ensuring equal justice for all. We do so by actively educating ourselves and our communities about the inequities engrained in our legal system and acting to eradicate them in the pursuit of justice for all people.