



TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY BAR ASSOCIATION

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*indicates non-voting member

The mission of the Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association is to serve the members of the Pierce County community by promoting professionalism, community service and collegiality among lawyers; improving access to justice; increasing the awareness of the role that the law plays in people's lives; offering programs, benefits and services to its members; supporting diversity and inclusion within the legal profession; and by enhancing and supporting the judicial system.

July 23, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Washington State Bar Association
Board of Governors
1325 Fourth Ave, Suite 600
Seattle, WA 98101-2539

Re: Open Letter of the TPCBA Board of Trustees to the WSBA Board of Governors

Dear President Majumdar, the WSBA Board of Governors, the Tacoma-Pierce County Minority Bar Association, and the Minority Bars Associations of the State of Washington:

The membership of the Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association (TPCBA) includes over 1,400 attorneys who practice in the South Sound, one of the most racially diverse regions of our state. The TPCBA Board of Trustees believes that justice is the core of our mission as legal professionals, and the racism inherent in our legal system impedes that mission. We believe that Black lives matter, and we celebrate the work of the Tacoma-Pierce County Minority Bar Association, the WSBA Diversity Committee, and Washington's statewide Minority Bar Associations. We unequivocally support and endorse the June 18, 2020, Proposal for the Board of Governors presented by the WSBA Diversity Committee (the Diversity Proposal), which is enclosed here.

Accordingly, the TPCBA Board of Trustees was distressed to learn that WSBA Carla Higginson recently opposed the fair and reasonable requests presented in the Diversity Proposal with racist comments at the June 26, 2020, meeting of the Board of Governors. We write to express our disapproval of her statements: they were inappropriate, and they uphold and maintain racist systems which we as a legal profession are called to dismantle and correct. In response to Governor Higginson's remarks, the Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association Board of Trustees passed the following resolutions on June 21, 2020:

1. **Black lives matter.** The TPCBA Board of Trustees resolves and affirms that Black lives matter.
2. **Open Letter of Minority Bar Associations.** The Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association Board of Trustees endorses the Open Letter to the WSBA Board of Governors written by the Korean Bar Association dated July 9, 2020, and enclosed with this letter. The TPCBA adopts the letter in form and substance as our own statement.
3. **Encouraging Adoption of Diversity Proposal.** If the WSBA Board of Governors has not yet adopted every provision of the June 18, 2020, Proposal for the Board of

Governors presented by the WSBA Diversity Committee, the TPCBA Board of Trustees encourages the Board of Governors to adopt the proposal in its entirety. Adoption in its entirety would include adopting the Diversity Committees recommendation that the Board of Governors fully support efforts to require licensed legal professionals to complete at least one ethics credit in the topic of equity, inclusion and the mitigation of bias per each three year MCLE reporting period.

4. **We Adopt the Diversity Proposal.** To hold ourselves accountable and to model the behavior we wish to see at the WSBA Board of Governors, the TPCBA Board of Trustees has adopted the Diversity Proposal – to the extent possible for a local bar association – as if it had been presented to us. Recognizing we have no authority to impose CLE requirements on our members, the TPCBA BOT encourages all TPCBA members to complete at least one ethics credit in the topic of equity, inclusion and the mitigation of bias per each three year MCLE reporting period.
5. **Commitment and Accountability to the Work.** The TPCBA Board of Trustees commits itself to meaningfully pursuing anti-racist work as individuals and as a Board of Trustees. To hold ourselves accountable to this commitment, we have resolved to express this commitment in this open letter to the Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association and to the Minority Bar Associations of the State of Washington. The TPCBA Board of Trustees thanks those groups for their commitment to dismantling systemic oppression. We support you, we see you, and we thank you.

These resolutions do not complete the work of the TPCBA Board of Trustees – they begin it. We embark on a long overdue journey toward making our local bar more diverse, equitable, and inclusive. The work is hard but necessary, and we are ready to embrace the discomfort that comes with it.

What happened on June 26, 2020, disregarded the tireless and dedicated work of legal professionals committed to the true work of justice. It was a problematic moment for our profession. But in all problematic moments, we believe there is hope for growth and change. We urge the Board of Governors to see this moment as an opportunity to do meaningful work to make our profession more Equitable, Diverse, and Inclusive.

Sincerely,



James W. McCormick
TPCBA President

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TPCBA Vice-President

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TPBCA Secretary-Treasurer

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Encl: Proposal for the Board of Governors dates June 18, 2020
Open Letter to the WSBA Board of Governors, dated July 9, 2020

CC: Tacoma-Pierce County Bar Association Membership
Open Distribution

JWM/kk