Maureen O’Rourke  
Chair  
Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar  
American Bar Association  
321 N. Clark Street  
Chicago, IL 60654  

RE: Standards Review Committee’s New Recommendation on Standard 503  

Dear Chair O’Rourke:  

On the eve of celebrating its 50th anniversary of giving people of diverse backgrounds an opportunity to become lawyers, the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, Inc. (CLEO) urges the Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar to retain the requirement of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) for law school admission. CLEO asserts that reliance on any other test should be confined to a small number of candidates under limited circumstances, such as those who may have recently taken another test as part of a joint-degree program. While other standardized tests have their uses for a variety of subject matters, none of them serves the same purpose as the LSAT. Neither have they been developed specifically for the purpose of predicting the test-taker’s ability to succeed in law school. The LSAT has successfully identified applicants’ preparedness for the study of law for 70 years – in particular, by testing logic, reasoning, and critical thinking capabilities.

In 1993, CLEO and LSAC helped create the foundation for the growth of academic support programs throughout legal education. Today, these programs contribute to academic success not only for historically underrepresented ethnic students and socioeconomically disadvantaged students, but for all students. Moreover, because of structural inequality throughout our nation’s educational system, if every student is to be given an opportunity to develop his/her full range of skills and values, law school academic support programs must be calibrated to their particular student body. Having one, standard predictive factor, the LSAT, enhances this process.

CLEO values LSAC’s long-standing leadership in law school admissions, which includes not only the LSAT, but also the creation and maintenance of an infrastructure that supports CLEO’s and law schools’ efforts to advance equality, diversity, and fairness in law school admissions. Like CLEO, LSAC has been a driving force in helping people of color and others who are underrepresented in the legal profession gain fair access to an education that empowers them to advance the cause of equal justice.

To that end, we support an admissions process that includes a variety of indicators to assess a student’s likelihood of succeeding in law school, but also believe that having one predictive tool common to every applicant promotes equal treatment for all. We understand and support the desire of law schools to open their doors even wider to candidates from science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and other disciplines. However, we urge law schools to retain the LSAT as their primary admissions test and implement a more holistic admissions process that surpasses Grade-Point Average and LSAT scores to consider other markers of success in the practice of law, such as, a student’s motivation and achievements prior, during and since undergraduate school.

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Although significant progress toward greater equity and inclusion in law has been made through the efforts of CLEO and others, much more remains to be done. As CLEO prepares to celebrate 50 years of success, we stand with LSAC and other allies looking forward to the next 50 years of advancing excellence—which must include diversity and inclusion—in legal education and ultimately in the legal profession.

Sincerely,

Cassandra Sneed Ogden
Chief Executive Officer

cc: Barry Currier