October 27, 2017

Maureen O’Rourke, Chair
ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar
321 N. Clark Street, 21st Floor
Chicago, IL 60654

Dear Madame Chair,

I write to urge the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar to retain the requirement of the Law School Admission Test (LSAT) for law school admissions and not substitute another test for the LSAT.

The Pre-Law Summer Institute for American Indians and Alaska Natives (PLSI), a program of the American Indian Law Center, Inc. (AILC), was established in 1967 when fewer than 25 attorneys nationwide identified as American Indian or Alaska Native. Since then, more than 1,200 Native Americans have gone through PLSI, many of whom have gone to law school with a law school graduation success rate of approximately 90%. In September 2017, the PLSI celebrated its 50th Anniversary, and over these 50 years, the PLSI has relied on the LSAT as an important factor to consider to best evaluate the likelihood of success in law school in the PLSI program’s admissions process. Given the program’s success rate, it is difficult to contemplate another test or factor that would substitute for the LSAT that has been a basic part of how our program was developed and has contributed to its success for these many decades.

As noted in the Council on Legal Education Opportunity, Inc.’s (CLEO) October 26, 2017, press release, the LSAT has served as the gold standard in identifying law school applicants’ preparedness for the study of law. The LSAT tests for reading comprehension, logical reasoning, and analytical reasoning, all of which are important for law school success. It provides one standard that can be used in combination with other considerations to best serve underrepresented and economically disadvantaged students.

From our 50 years of experience in preparing Native Americans for law school, we note the following factors that have a direct bearing on Native students’ chances for success in law school: LSAT score, undergraduate grade point average, number of years and quality of activities since completion of undergraduate degree, age, financial status, and marital/dependent status. PLSI uses an all-inclusive approach to evaluate the pre-law students who participate in our program. From admission into PLSI, to evaluation by law professors of academic
performance during the program, and working with law schools that recruit our students from across the country, PLSI can show that given all these factors, including the LSAT, the admission of our students into law schools provides a high likelihood of success. The LSAT has been a part of the formula that has clearly increased the number of American Indian and Alaska Natives in the study and practice of law. The LSAT is included as a factor, but it is one of many factors and should never be misused as the sole predictor for success in law school.

Importantly, used as an effective tool in evaluating certain skills, the LSAT can also be helpful in determining which students might need access to academic support services in law school and on other standardized tests, such as the bar examination that they will be required to take upon graduation, in order to practice law. Our organization depends on the LSAT as a significant tool, and remains confident in the information that we receive through it.

For these reasons, we request that the Section retain the LSAT as the most effective testing tool in the law school admissions process and not accept another test that does not evaluate the same skills as the LSAT.

Sincerely,

Helen B. Padilla
Director
American Indian Law Center, Inc.

Cc: Kent Lollis, Law School Admissions Council