

ABA Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar  
Proposed Revisions to Standard 503

July 10, 2017

As the ABA Council of the Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar considers revisions to Standard 503, we, the undersigned Admissions Deans and Directors, write to thank the ABA for the chance to provide our perspectives on the proposed changes. We share the ABA's goal of promoting high quality legal education, and in our roles, we work to attract new talent to the profession each year.

The over 200 ABA-approved law schools represent a wide range of student populations, with different skills, different needs and different goals. Because of these differences, our admissions processes also vary. Many application components—from personal statement questions to number of letters of recommendation required to the use of interviews—are determined by each school with the goal of identifying students with high likelihood of success in law school and in the profession. Even for those application components which are currently largely uniform across schools—such as standardized testing and GPA reporting—the emphasis placed on each application component can vary.

While we believe that allowing law schools the flexibility to determine which valid and reliable tests to accept promotes the ABA's and our common goals, we choose today not to comment on the particulars of Section 503 as they relate to the requirement of a standardized tests in the admissions process, nor to weigh in on which test or tests the ABA should approve. We do this precisely because we represent different schools and may have different approaches and opinions about what would be best for our individual institutions.

What we do share is a concern that creating a uniform process for determining validity and reliability of standardized tests, while also eliminating the opportunity to apply for a variance, has the potential to limit experimentation and innovation in the admissions process. We know from the language allowing for variances under Standard 107 and Rule 33 that experimentation and innovation are also valued by the ABA.

For these reasons, we strongly urge the Council to reconsider its proposed revisions to Standard 503 and, at a minimum, retain the possibility of applications for variance by individual schools, no matter what specific action is taken on standardized testing in the admissions process more generally.

Respectfully submitted:

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