March 28, 2018

To: Council of the ABA Section of Legal Education and Admissions to the Bar

Re: Proposed changes to Standard 503

Dear Colleagues:

As members of the Minority Network of law school admission professionals and their allies, we oppose the elimination of current Standard 503, as we believe a commonly accepted admission test substantially increases the likelihood all applicants, especially applicants from underrepresented and historically disadvantaged backgrounds, are fairly evaluated in the admissions process.

The Network began in the late 1980’s to address the concerns of admission professionals from diverse backgrounds. The Network is concerned about the recruitment and retention of underrepresented and historically disadvantaged background students and the fairness and equality of the admission process. We believe that law schools need every tool possible to evaluate candidates before they enter law school. Since 1977, law school academic support faculty, bar support faculty, legal writing professionals and others have relied on LSAT scores and GPA’s to advise their students. While the rigor of undergraduate institutions vary and majors establish different competencies, the LSAT is the one unifying comparable element of the student’s file. An optional law school admission test could deprive these front-line advisors of an essential tool in assisting student success in law school. Departure from the use of a common test abandons decades of statistical analysis and test evolution and leaves a vacuum that schools will have to fill without guidance or a measurable standard.

We agree outcomes are important, but if the outcomes include removing objective measures of student potential for success, and if outcomes include the potential for students who do gain access to law school to amass life-changing debt before they discover they may not succeed in passing the bar, gain employment or vet a sincere interest in the law, then we believe a departure from Standard 503 could cause great harm to students in general. In particular, removing a standard objective measure will significantly harm first generation and underrepresented groups whose access to the profession can be directly traced to the implementation of standard objective measures of evaluation.

We cannot remain silent as the procedural tool that provides extraordinary access is criticized and its value diminished. We are well aware of the history and legacy of accusations of test disparity, and agree law schools over-rely on the LSAT, but we nevertheless believe the LSAT is far better
than any other test for predicting success in law school, and patently better than no test at all. The critics that label the LSAT a barrier are not taking into consideration the fact that all standardized tests have a gap between average performance of resourced and under resourced test takers. Before the LSAT was adopted as an assessment tool, there was little or no objectivity in the admission process. An applicant’s networks and the reputation of an undergraduate school were the primary determining factors for admission; many members of traditionally underrepresented groups did not have adequate access to either factor. The LSAT may not be a perfect tool, and there is needed discussion regarding use of the test, but it has been and must continue to be the best tool for leveling the playing field for qualified candidates who wish to obtain a legal education.

The percentage of minority law students who earned JD degrees steadily has increased—from 24.1% of total JDs awarded in 2011 to 29.9% of total JDs awarded in 20171. That growing percentage of minority JD graduates were admitted using the LSAT. This is not the right time for the ABA to make the momentous decision to eliminate any formal test for law school admissions. Eliminating the requirement of the test before we understand the impact of the ABA’s proposed changes is unwise. The hypothesized gain of increasing access by eliminating the test requirement ignores the history of the admission to legal education and the likelihood that the process can be improved without abandoning a measure of equity.

We the undersigned members of the Minority Network and allies urge the ABA Council to maintain the current admission test language in Standard 503.

Submitted for your consideration2,

Reyes Aguilar
Associate Dean, University of Utah S.J. Quinney College of Law

Jay L. Austin
Assistant Dean of Admissions and Student Financial Service,
University of California, Irvine

Carla Anderson
Director of Operations for Admissions and Financial Aid, Assistant Director of Admissions
University of Pennsylvania Law School

Pamela A. Bloomquist
Assistant Dean, JD Admissions and Financial Aid
Loyola University Chicago School of Law

---

1 http://abarequireddisclosures.org/
2 Title and school name listed for affiliation purposes only
Kyle Brazile  
Assistant Dean for Admissions  
North Carolina Central University School of Law  

Lauren Butler  
Assistant Director of Admissions  
University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law  

Shani Butts  
Assistant Dean for Admissions  
The Catholic University of America, Columbus School of Law  

Lydia Dagenais  
Director of Admissions  
University of Missouri-Kansas City School of Law  

Iain Davis  
Assistant Dean of Admissions  
University of Denver Sturm College of Law  

Bryan Fair  
Thomas Skinner Professor of Law  
University of Alabama School of Law  

Lisa Gear  
Assistant Dean of Admissions  
Southwestern Law School  

Michelle Heck  
Director of Admissions  
University of Missouri School of Law  

Katrin Hussmann Schroll  
Assistant Dean for Admissions  
University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law  

Nolan James  
Assistant Dean for Admissions  
The University of Akron School of Law  

Andrew James  
Assistant Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid  
Arizona State University Sandra Day O'Connor College of Law  

Cheryl Jester-George  
Senior Director of Admissions  
Georgia State University College of Law
Gisele Joachim
Dean of Enrollment Management
Seton Hall Law School

Susan Krinsky
Associate Dean
University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law

Cameron Lue-Sang
Director of Admissions
Golden Gate University School of Law

Bianca Mack
Assistant Dean of Admissions
University of North Carolina School of Law

Randall Mathews
Associate Dean for Enrollment Services
Lincoln Memorial University-John J. Duncan, Jr. School of Law

Monique McCarthy
Associate Dean of Enrollment Management & Communications
University of Detroit Mercy School of Law

Reginald McGahee,
Associate Dean of Student Affairs and Admissions
Howard University School of Law

Shawn McShay
Assistant Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid
Boston College Law School

Barbara Kaye Miller
Assistant Dean of Admissions
Creighton University School of Law

Cory Muñoz
Admissions & Recruitment Specialist
The University of New Mexico School of Law

Sharon Pinkney
Assistant Dean for Admissions & Enrollment (retired)
University of California, Davis School of Law (King Hall)
Estuardo Ponciano  
Director of Admissions  
University of California, Irvine School of Law  

Amanda Smith  
Assistant Director of Admissions  
University of California, Irvine School of Law  

Robert Solomon  
Assistant Vice Provost, Office of Diversity & Inclusion  
The Ohio State University  

Michael States  
Assistant Dean for Admissions, Financial Aid, and Diversity Initiatives  
The Ohio State University, Moritz College of Law  

Tracy L. Simmons,  
Assistant Dean of Admissions and Financial Aid  
University of the Pacific, McGeorge School of Law  

Douglas Sylvester  
Dean and Professor of Law  
Arizona State University, Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law  

Nicole Tarrence  
Assistant Director of Admissions  
South Texas College of Law  

Thomas Williams  
Assistant Dean and Chief of Staff  
Arizona State University, Sandra Day O’Connor College of Law  

Julia Yaffe  
Senior Assistant Dean for External Affairs (retired)  
Santa Clara University School of Law