



STATE BAR OF WISCONSIN

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December 9, 2020

Clerk of the Wisconsin Supreme Court
110 East Main Street, Suite 215
P.O. Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

RE: Petition 20-04 Student Practice Rule

Dear Honorable Justices,

On December 4, 2020, the State Bar of Wisconsin's Board of Governors voted unanimously to support petition 20-04 which modifies Ch. 50, the student practice rule. This petition is presented by the Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission as a means of increasing access to justice for persons of limited means, encouraging a more diverse legal community and improving legal training for the future members of the State Bar of Wisconsin. We believe that the proposal strikes the appropriate balance between expanding access to legal assistance and ensuring appropriate oversight by licensed Wisconsin attorneys.

The legal clinics and internships available through our Wisconsin law schools are an important avenue for students to learn while helping to serve the unmet legal needs of Wisconsin residents. This rule change would expand the number of students who can participate each year, giving more students the ability to serve sooner and increasing the number of people helped.

We also believe that it is in the public interest to help expand and diversify the pool of potential Wisconsin lawyers by allowing recent graduates from other states to practice for up to 12 months under the supervision of a licensed Wisconsin attorney if they are working for government, non-profit, or pro bono entities. We face twin demographic challenges in the legal profession. Our membership is aging, and it often does not reflect the diversity of the communities we serve. We anticipate that this rule change will help these organizations attract a more diverse workforce.

Improving access to justice in Wisconsin will take many small and some large changes. This is one small change that we can make to both modernize the rule and support efforts to reach underserved communities.

Petition 20-04 reinforces the State Bar's access to justice initiatives, including ensuring adequate funding for key components of our legal system (civil legal aid, public defense services, and the court system), encouraging pro bono service, and removing barriers to accessing the courts.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Executive Director Larry Martin or Advocacy and Access to Justice Director Lisa Roys.

Sincerely,

Kathleen A. Brost, President

State Bar of Wisconsin