



BEVERLY WICKSTROM
PRESIDENT, EAU CLAIRE

JAY A. URBAN
PRESIDENT-ELECT, MILWAUKEE

KRISTIN M. CAFFERTY
VICE-PRESIDENT, RACINE

KEVIN R. MARTIN
SECRETARY, OAK CREEK

AMY M. RISSEUW
TREASURER, APPLETON

EDWARD E. ROBINSON
PAST-PRESIDENT, BROOKFIELD

BRYAN M. ROESSLER
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

November 30, 2020

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL and U.S. MAIL

Clerk of the Wisconsin Supreme Court
Attn: Deputy Clerk-Rules Petitions
PO Box 1688
Madison, WI 53701-1688

Re: Supporting Rule Petition 20-04, relating to the proposed changes to SCR Chapter 50

Dear Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court,

The Wisconsin Association for Justice (WAJ) writes in support of the Wisconsin Access to Justice Commission's proposed revision to the Student Practice Rule, SCR 50. WAJ shares the proponents' belief that the change will increase access to affordable legal services for individuals in need, support a more equitable and diverse membership in the Wisconsin Bar, and improve the experiential education of law students.

Revising SCR 50 will increase access to affordable legal services for individuals in need. The rule change will help people in need by allowing law school graduates from all states to practice in Wisconsin at government, non-profit, or pro bono entities, under supervision of a licensed attorney for up to 12 months after their graduation from law school while they study for and take the Wisconsin bar exam.

The legal services these individuals will be providing impact the community and the bar in two important ways. First, the permitted services are provided at no-cost to the targeted populations. Second, the rule expands the pool of attorneys who can take on this work. Finally, allowing new graduates from all states will increase the volume and quality of services provided to underserved individuals.

The legal community should strive to reflect the diversity of our state. WAJ has recently undertaken several initiatives in pursuit of this goal. We are heartened that this rule is being proposed in that spirit. The revised SCR 50 is a tool that can be used to increase the diversity of the Wisconsin bar. The revised rule expands the experiential and community serving advocacy currently available only to those studying in Wisconsin to law school graduates nationwide. These changes will serve as a means of drawing talented and diverse lawyers into our state. Individuals who begin their careers here are more likely to stay and remain, improving their communities as well as making an impact on the law.

Experiential learning leads to more effective lawyers. As many of our members know, law students who can represent actual clients and tackle legal issues in court enter the profession as more skilled advocates. They use these skills to better serve their clients and the law. Our neighboring state of Minnesota has allowed students to begin clinical legal practice after one year of law school since 1982. As the proponents of this petition have noted, fifteen states have adopted a rule allowing clinical law students to practice under supervision after one year of law school, with positive results for those states. Both Wisconsin and Marquette law schools operate multiple clinical programs and this rule would allow them to expand their offerings. Changing the rule to allow students to have clinical legal experience after their first year will improve the mix of legal services available in our state and enhance the skills of our future lawyers.

We are proud to join our colleagues in the bar who seek enactment of this rule change.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

Wisconsin Association for Justice

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'BW', is positioned below the text 'Wisconsin Association for Justice'.

Attorney Beverly Wickstrom
President

Attorney James D. Rogers
Government Relations Director