



February 10, 2022

Open Letter to Members
of the New Hampshire Bar Association:

Re: *Diversity and Inclusion Project of the New Hampshire Bar Foundation*

On behalf of the New Hampshire Bar Foundation, I write to share the just completed Diversity and Inclusion Survey Summary and Recommendations. I encourage you to review the report and slide deck that can be found at nhbarfoundation.org/diversity-and-inclusion-survey/.

The Foundation, as the charitable arm of the New Hampshire Bar, works to advance the rule of law and assure that justice applies equally to all. Among others, the Foundation's mission includes facilitating the identification of justice-related issues regarding emerging civil legal needs in our state, paying close attention to changing demographics, the economy, and the legal struggles facing different population groups. As New Hampshire lawyers and advocates for justice, it is our shared responsibility to lead.

With those principles in mind, the Foundation undertook to study the state of diversity and inclusion in New Hampshire's legal community. Last spring the Foundation brought together a group of interested stakeholders to explore the ways the New Hampshire legal community could understand the status of diversity and inclusion, and identify the impediments to and opportunities for action. In short, the Foundation wanted to know how we collectively could "do better" and promote an inclusive legal community that reflects the changing demographics of our state.

The Foundation recognized that a critical first step was to have a reliable way to understand the existing state of diversity and inclusion, and to study the question in detail. The Foundation spearheaded the retention of a nationally recognized analytics firm to help craft a state-wide survey, gather and analyze data, and leverage expertise to provide data-informed action items.

With the participation of almost 2,000 New Hampshire Bar Association (NHBA) members responding to the survey, the data resulted in a deep understanding of the experiences, perspectives, and opinions of our legal community with respect to diversity and inclusion. Survey results point to opportunities to better engage members, support women lawyers and lawyers from underrepresented demographics, and recruit and retain a more diverse workforce. The Survey recommendations offer initiatives to address unmet challenges, improve justice and fortify the rule of law.

For many, this effort reflects a moral imperative. For all members of the New Hampshire legal community, it reflects a future where decisions are informed by diverse opinions and experiences with outcomes that are better for it, and a legal profession that reflects the people and communities we serve.

It is with a great sense of pride and optimism that the Foundation delivers the Diversity and Inclusion Survey Summary and Recommendations to the New Hampshire legal community. We know, however, that the data and analytics generated by this comprehensive effort is a start, not an end to the process of inclusivity. The Foundation is confident that this report provides stakeholders with actionable and data-informed recommendations to advance diversity and inclusion efforts that serve the best interests of our community and profession.

The Foundation highlights and thanks our board members Mary Elizabeth Tenn, Esq. and Scott Harris, Esq., and our executive director George Moore, Esq. who were instrumental in launching this project and driving it to conclusion.

In undertaking this effort, the Foundation also received the generous financial support of many individuals and law firms who donated to help fund this effort, including our leadership donors the Honorable John and Skye Maher and the Sheehan Phinney law firm. Thank you also to the NHBA members who completed the survey and contributed their opinions and ideas within the context of the survey, and through calls and emails. None of this would be possible without the variety of opinions you expressed.

Finally, the Foundation would like to recognize Chief Justice Gordon MacDonald and the Associate Justices of the New Hampshire Supreme Court for their unwavering support of this project and ongoing commitment to creating a more diverse and inclusive legal community in New Hampshire.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'J' and 'T' that are interconnected, with a horizontal line extending to the right.

James J. Tenn, Jr.
Chair of the New Hampshire Bar Foundation