

**NEW YORK
CITY BAR**

**COMMITTEE ON PRO BONO AND
LEGAL SERVICES**

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December 4, 2015

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Re: Int. 958, a Local Law to amend the administrative code of the city of New York,
in relation to client satisfaction surveys for city-funded indigent legal services

Dear Council Member Lancman:

I write on behalf of the New York City Bar Association Committee on Pro Bono and Legal Services to provide comments on the above-referenced bill. The Pro Bono and Legal Services Committee addresses issues surrounding pro bono work by attorneys and advocates in support of efforts to provide legal services to those in need. The Committee is comprised of representatives from law firms, legal service providers, corporations and law schools and is currently engaged in significant efforts to study and enhance access to justice.

This Committee supports the transparency and accountability goals of Int. 958. We write to provide certain recommendations so that those goals can be most effectively accomplished.

First, in order to truly and accurately determine the quality and effectiveness of civil and criminal indigent legal services provided by city-funded attorneys, we believe that Int. 958 should charge the Civil Justice Coordinator and Criminal Justice Coordinator with the ongoing development and testing of a data collection methodology to use to accomplish the analysis envisioned by the bill, rather than directing a particular approach in the legislation itself.

Second, we recommend that a working group be formed to determine what data would be most useful to truly determine the quality of the legal services, and what system would be most effective to collect it.

Third, any analysis of city-funded attorney services should seek to determine the following:

(i) if the attorney followed best practices during the representation (e.g., Did you meet with your attorney before your court date?; If you are disabled, did an attorney or paralegal come to your home? ; Did your attorney explain what your options were and answer your questions? ; Were you treated with respect by all staff of the law office?),

(ii) the client's satisfaction with the quality of the representation s/he received, and

(iii) where applicable, the client's satisfaction with his or her treatment by the judges, court staff and officers, police and prosecutor in his or her case, because all of these could be factors in the client's satisfaction with the legal services s/he received.

Finally, survey questions need to be carefully drafted to capture the true nature of the representation and the client's entire experience, so that the survey does not merely become dependent on the legal outcome of the client's case. We believe that a diverse working group can be helpful in developing a full range of appropriate and useful survey questions.

Thank you for your consideration and please let us know if we can be of any assistance going forward.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison King". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alison King
Chair, Pro Bono and Legal Services Committee