



NEW YORK
CITY BAR

SHEILA S. BOSTON
PRESIDENT

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Via Email

Hon. Karen Peters

Co-Chair, New York State Bar Association Attorney Well-Being Task Force
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Libby Coreno

Co-Chair, New York State Bar Association Attorney Well-Being Task Force
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James Barnes

Chair, CLE Working Group of NYSBA Attorney Well-Being Task Force
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Re: NYSBA Attorney Well-Being Task Force Report

Dear Judge Peters, Ms. Coreno and Mr. Barnes:

On behalf of the New York City Bar Association, I write to commend the State Bar's Attorney Well-Being Task Force on its recent report, "This is Us: From Striving Alone to Thriving Together."

It is vitally important that we address the serious issues of attorney wellness, mental health and substance use disorders that are so pervasive in the legal profession, and disseminate much-needed—and, at times, life-saving—information as widely as possible, increase access to treatment programs and other resources, and normalize conversations around these sensitive topics. The Task Force's report is a significant contribution in this regard, both in conveying the results of the 2020 attorney well-being survey of lawyers across the state and in underscoring the need to get information and services out to as many lawyers as possible.

We support the Task Force's recommendations, including that CLEs and other programming addressing attorney well-being be made more widely available, and that we should urge collaboration across the profession—with law schools, law firms, the judiciary, and others—towards this collective goal. However, we are also cognizant of the fact that many

About the Association

The mission of the New York City Bar Association, which was founded in 1870 and has 25,000 members, is to equip and mobilize a diverse legal profession to practice with excellence, promote reform of the law, and uphold the rule of law and access to justice in support of a fair society and the public interest in our community, our nation, and throughout the world.

THE ASSOCIATION OF THE BAR OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
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lawyers may not make the time to prioritize their own health in the midst of managing their busy legal practices and handling their clients' pressing needs. This is perhaps especially true for solo practitioners and small firm lawyers, who are running their own businesses and often juggle back-office functions alongside the bread-and-butter work of representing their clients; as a result, they often cannot step away from work to take care of personal needs or even take a true vacation, as they do not have the benefit or backstop of colleagues, supervisors, or human resources staff available to lawyers in larger law firms and corporate legal departments. Solo and small firm lawyers also do not have ready access to resources like in-house programming that may be offered (or even required) at big firms and other large legal organizations.

We agree that a multi-faceted approach to addressing attorney wellness is a sound strategy, and that buy-in from all sectors of the legal profession will go a long way toward the ultimate goal of improving lawyer well-being throughout the state. We would also urge NYSBA and the Attorney Well-Being Task Force to continue to consider the merits of a standalone mental health, substance use and lawyer well-being CLE requirement, and to study closely developments in this area over the next year—and, as always, we stand ready to work with you and other stakeholders across the state on this important initiative.

Best regards,

Sheila S. Boston, President
New York City Bar Association

Priscilla Lundin, Chair
Lawyer Assistance Program Committee*

Anne Wolfson, Chair
Small Law Firm Committee*

Karen Simmons, Chair
Mental Health Law Committee*

cc: reportsgroup@nysba.org

* The City Bar Lawyer Assistance Program (LAP) provides free and confidential support and services throughout the five boroughs of New York City and Westchester County for members of the legal profession and their families who are struggling with mental health and substance use issues. The LAP Committee supports LAP, including by participating in outreach, co-sponsoring events and CLEs, and assisting with LAP's support groups, which include AA, Narcotics Anonymous and Gamblers Anonymous. LAP volunteers, some of whom are Committee members, act as monitors, provide peer support, and are panelists on LAP education programs for the bar and bench. The Small Law Firm Committee supports the work of solo practitioners and members of small law firms, and focuses on legal issues and best practices specific to lawyers in these practices. The Mental Health Law Committee focuses on legal issues concerning mental illness and intellectual disabilities, ranging from civil rights to access to medical care and other challenges faced by individuals coping with mental illness.

Contact

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