



THE STATE BAR OF CALIFORNIA

OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Leah T. Wilson, Chief Operating Officer

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August 29, 2017

Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson
Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol Room 2032
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable John M.W. Moorlach
Vice-Chair, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 2048
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Joel Anderson
Member, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 5052
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Robert M. Hertzberg
Member, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 4038
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Bill Monning
Member, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 313
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Henry I. Stern
Member, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 3070
Sacramento, CA 95814

Honorable Bob Wieckowski
Member, Senate Committee on Judiciary
State Capitol, Room 4085
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Chairwoman Jackson and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

I am pleased to write this letter of introduction as the incoming Executive Director of the State Bar of California. While many of you know me from my two-year tenure as Chief Operating Officer (COO) of the Bar, I want to take this opportunity to give you a sense of the background that I bring to the State Bar, and the values that I bring to the position. The Bar has undergone a period of rapid and significant transformation over the last year, due in large part to the effective partnership between outgoing Executive Director Elizabeth Parker and outgoing Board of Trustees President Jim Fox. I very much look forward to demonstrating continued commitment to reform, and to replicating Elizabeth's and Jim's success, under the direction of incoming Board President Michael Colantuono, and with the support of the State Bar's dedicated employees. I am confident that the values and principles that Michael and I will bring to our new positions will result in sustained improvement and progress at the Bar.

After obtaining joint degrees in law and public policy from the University of California, Berkeley in 1999, I embarked on a career informed by my belief in the power of good

government. I have strived to develop efficient and imaginative strategies which harness the power of our public institutions to transform lives. Immediately after finishing graduate school I began to work at the Judicial Council, where I designed and implemented a statewide program to fund, train, and evaluate court-appointed counsel for parents and children in the juvenile dependency system — among the most vulnerable people our courts serve. Caseload standards developed under my leadership continue to inform statewide decisions regarding adequate funding and caseloads for child welfare attorneys.

In 2011 I joined the Alameda County Administrator's Office, where my focus was on the development and implementation of the County's Public Safety Realignment Plan. I sought to build strong relationships with public and non-profit justice partners and community advocates, efforts which reflected these organizations' unique and interdependent roles in criminal justice reform. In addition, my focus on stakeholder engagement reflected my belief that — without partnership and collaboration between government agencies, community-based organizations, and advocates — Realignment could not succeed.

While working in the front lines of Realignment implementation, I was raising three children. Committed to balancing career and parenting, I served as an active classroom volunteer for each of my sons. In the classroom, I observed first-hand the devastating impacts of the opportunity gap, appearing as early as the first grade. Without intervention, the resulting achievement gap too often became nearly insurmountable by middle school. My classroom advocacy ultimately translated to school, and then district, reform efforts, persuading me to run for the Berkeley Unified School District Board of Directors. I won and eventually served as its President. In that role, I had the opportunity to empower parents and community advocates to be active participants and partners in school reform efforts which were previously primarily academic and district-led. I also advocated for the strategic use of district resources to fund interventions and strategies proven successful at closing both the opportunity and achievement gaps. Prioritizing investments in universal preschool, wraparound services, teacher training and meaningful class size reduction were keys to this successful strategy. Berkeley is a challenging community to serve, with a politically active population with real diversity in terms of race, class, expectations of our schools, and visions for student success. I am proud of the work I did there with my fellow Board members and our staff — successes I hope to replicate at the Bar on the staff side of the table.

Upon my appointment as Court Executive Officer of the Alameda County Superior Court in 2013 I was asked to resign from the school board to avoid potential conflicts of interest. This was a difficult decision, but the chance to make a significant countywide impact was an opportunity that I could not pass up. In addition to the administrative and fiscal responsibilities of a Court Executive Officer, I was able to expand the Court's limited pre-trial services program, in part by instituting an evidence-based risk assessment tool and corresponding protocols that greatly

increased the number of defendants eligible for pre-trial release which reduced local government costs and impact on families, without risking public safety. I also supported expansion of Alameda's drug court programs, increasing access to this community-based treatment approach to addressing the root causes of criminal behavior, while lowering costs and improving outcomes. Expansion of alternatives to incarceration proved challenging even in "liberal" Alameda County. However, once again, partnerships and collaboration in conjunction with effective leadership ultimately paved the way for this important work.

In 2015 I was persuaded to leave the Court by the opportunity to contribute to a transformational reform effort at the State Bar. My decision to join the State Bar as its Chief Operating Officer was informed by the Board of Trustees' vision to achieve lasting reform, including a clear succession plan for the Executive Director. By hiring both a new Executive Director and a COO together, the Trustees enabled the simultaneous external and internal work necessary to reform. Much progress has been made as a result in just two years — achieving both clearly visible structural reforms — including the coming departure of the State Bar Sections — and less obvious internal ones, including the slow, difficult but essential work of changing the culture of the Bar from one bound to the status quo to one that collaborates, innovates and grows. With this foundational work in place, the Board, management, and line staff can move forward with clarity of purpose: one State Bar rather than siloes, with a common commitment to the Bar's mission of public protection, promoting diversity in the legal profession, and pursuing access to justice.

In my new role as Executive Director, I intend to work closely with the Board President, the Board, management and line staff and our external stakeholders — including leaders in all branches of government — to build upon this progress. This will involve continued efforts to change the Bar's culture so it can succeed as a focused regulatory agency, as well as ensuring that our people and our fiscal resources are used to best support our mission of public protection. Effective and productive partnerships with the Bar's stakeholders, including and most especially its dedicated workforce, will be critical to this effort.

Incoming Board President Colantuono will soon lead the Board of Trustees in reviewing, updating and refining the Bar's policy and programmatic agenda to pursue its public protection mission. My overarching goal as the executive responsible for leading the implementation of that agenda will be to advance protection of the public by inculcating a culture of excellence at the State Bar succinctly described as:

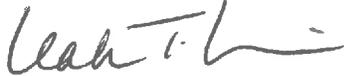
- ✓ Compliant and Accurate
- ✓ Analytical and Evaluative
 - ✓ Accountable
 - ✓ Innovative

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I look forward to the Legislature's continued role in this important work, both through its oversight function, which I welcome, and through statutory reforms to further empower the Bar to serve the mission the Legislature and the Supreme Court have set for us. You can expect me to be an honest, transparent, and collaborative partner in this effort.

With best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Leah T. Wilson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Leah T. Wilson

cc: Margie Estrada Caniglia, Chief Counsel, Senate Judiciary Committee
Mike Petersen, Republican Counsel, Senate Judiciary Committee