

## **The Connecticut Legal Community's Diversity & Inclusion Pledge**

Each Signatory to this Diversity and Inclusion Pledge (the “Pledge”) hereby reaffirms its ongoing commitment to advancing diversity and inclusion within our own legal organizations and within the Connecticut legal community as a whole. We hereby declare that a core value of our organizations is to promote diversity and inclusion. In doing so, we pledge to respect the diversity of all individuals, and to create inclusive environments within our legal organizations that allow diverse individuals to succeed, grow, be respected and valued, contribute to the overall strength of our organizations, and share in the benefits and rewards of those contributions. Diversity, as it is used in the Pledge, is an inclusive concept, one that embraces age, color, ethnicity, familial or marital status, gender identity or expression, language, national origin, physical or mental disability, military or veteran status, race, religion, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic background.

We recognize that our legal organizations are stronger, more effective, and more capable of meeting the needs of our clients, business interests, and other external constituencies, if we embrace diversity and inclusion. We also affirm that creating a more diverse and inclusive legal community will positively impact the fair and just application of the law and strengthen the public trust in the administration of justice. We further recognize that the collaboration of the signatories to this pledge, through the identification and development of best practices, common tools and resources, will allow us to more effectively accomplish our goals of advancing diversity and inclusion within our own legal organizations and within the Connecticut legal community as a whole.

To fully realize these goals, we therefore also pledge our commitment to fully participate in the Diversity and Inclusion Plan (the “Plan”) described herein. We recognize that increased diversity and inclusiveness is accomplished and maintained by critically assessing and, where necessary, modifying our policies, practices, and “office culture” with regards to: education and training, development of cultural competencies, hiring, retention, mentorship, promotion and career advancement, development and participation of pipeline initiatives, and identifying and eliminating the effects of implicit and explicit bias. We recognize that this process will be an evolutionary one, and will be informed by both successes and challenges along the way. We recognize that these goals may be accomplished by working together, through full and meaningful participation in the Plan.

## **The Connecticut Legal Community's Diversity & Inclusion Plan**

As signatories to the Diversity and Inclusion Pledge (the "Pledge"), we are committed to participating in an evolutionary process that is intended to identify and implement best practices for the promotion of diversity and inclusion within our own legal organizations and within the Connecticut legal community as a whole.

While this is described as a multiyear process, the Connecticut Legal Community's Diversity and Inclusion Plan (the "Plan") does not represent a finite initiative with a firm beginning and end date. Rather, the Plan is intended to represent a reaffirmation of our existing and ongoing commitment to diversity and inclusion, and our pledge to full and meaningful participation in a watershed moment for diversity and inclusion in the Connecticut legal community.

Beginning with the launch of this effort at the Inaugural Diversity and Inclusion Summit in 2016, the signatories to the Pledge (the "Signatories") agree to develop and accomplish a series of implementation goals through a multiyear process, as generally described herein. The attainment of these goals will be pursued through the efforts and input of the Signatories. The Connecticut Bar Association (CBA) Diversity and Inclusion Committee and the Lawyers Collaborative for Diversity (LCD) will provide support for the efforts of the signatories. Following the inaugural Diversity and Inclusion Summit in October of 2016, the Signatories will participate, through a designated representative, in a series of quarterly meetings designed to assist the Signatories' progress in accomplishing the goals of that year. Each year, the Signatories, with the support of the CBA Diversity and Inclusion Committee and LCD, will also organize a Diversity and Inclusion Summit to summarize the efforts, successes and challenges of the prior year, and to plan for the goals of the upcoming year.

In working on these goals during the implementation of the Plan, the Signatories recognize that some of these efforts are already in place within our organizations. We also recognize that there may be differences in the implementation of these goals, depending on the size, nature and mission of our organizations. We recognize that continuously working on these goals, and being mindful of our practices, is vital to the strength of our organizations. The suggested goals of each year within the Plan are described further below, subject to changes as determined by the Signatories of Pledge.

### **Year One Focus: Infrastructure-Building, Self-Assessment and Reporting**

During Year One, the Signatories will work on building, to the extent not already in place, the necessary infrastructure for a successful diversity and inclusion effort within their own organizations. In doing so, the Signatories will focus on the identification and implementation of diversity and inclusion (D&I) best practices. These efforts will include: the creation and maintenance of a D&I committee; the leadership structure and charge of those committees; the creation and maintenance of internal mechanisms to safely and confidentially address individual D&I issues as they may arise; and the adoption of internal and external organizational D&I policies.

During Year One, the Signatories will work together to establish tools for self-assessment and benchmarking on D&I progress, to ensure meaningful accountability and measurable D & I progress within our organizations. These self-assessment and benchmarking tools will be used throughout participation in the Plan, and may be modified to reflect additional metrics identified in subsequent years.

## **Year Two Focus: Education and Training**

During Year Two, the Signatories will identify and/or develop, to the extent not already in place, organization-wide training programs and other appropriate educational resources on the wide-spread effects of implicit bias and its negative impact on D&I efforts. The Signatories will develop a series of education and training best practices recommendations for periodic and ongoing application within their organizations.

## **Year Three Focus: Hiring and Pipeline Initiatives**

During Year Three, the Signatories will assess and modify their recruitment and hiring processes, to the extent that they have not already done so, to ensure true equal opportunity employment practices and the elimination of implicit and explicit bias within those processes.

The Signatories will also focus on supporting and developing new D&I pipeline initiatives, e.g., mentorship, internship, informational, and shadowing programs designed to ensure that diverse individuals are invited and encouraged to learn about the legal profession and the signatory organizations' work while still in high school, college, and law school.

## **Year Four Focus: Retention**

During Year Four, the Signatories will attempt to ensure that their D&I efforts have tangible results in the future, by focusing on retention efforts. The Signatories will evaluate their organizational procedures, policies and practices and modify them as necessary to work towards retention of diverse individuals. The Signatories will develop and implement confidential internal assessment tools. The goal of these assessments is to allow for the collection of meaningful individual feedback and insight about challenges to retention and meaningful inclusion of diverse individuals within the organization. The Signatories will also focus on building internal formal and informal mentorship programs to foster the growth and advancement of diverse individuals within the organization.

## **Year Five Focus: Leadership and Career Advancement**

During Year Five, the Signatories will work to ensure that formal and informal leadership opportunities within the legal organization are meaningfully and realistically accessible to diverse individuals. The goal of these efforts is to continue efforts to open up the legal organizations' leadership structures so that they are reflective of a meaningful commitment to D&I, and that diverse individuals are able to obtain the necessary skills and tools to ascend into leadership.

The Signatories will assess and modify, as necessary, their policies, procedures and practices for promotions, career advancement and formal and informal opportunities for leadership. The Signatories will focus on developing clear and objective criteria for internal advancement, and will develop practices designed to eliminate implicit and explicit bias from these processes.

## **Year Six and Onwards:**

The Signatories will continue to assess their D&I performance, implement changes as necessary, and to serve as ambassadors within the broader Connecticut legal community for the Pledge and the Plan.