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February 10, 2017

Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners
601 Commonwealth Avenue, Suite 3600
P.O. Box 62535
Harrisburg, PA 17106-2535

**Re: Admission of Bar Applicants of All Immigrations Statuses and
Application of Parthiv Patel**

Dear Pennsylvania Board of Law Examiners:

On behalf of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association of Pennsylvania (APABA-PA), I write to urge you to consider admitting all qualified candidates to the bar regardless of immigration status. We ask that each candidate be evaluated on an individualized basis, as an individual's character and fitness to practice law is not tied to immigration status.

Historically, Asian Americans and other minority groups have faced a history of exclusion from bar admission due to explicit racial exclusions and non-citizen status. See Ozawa v. United States, 260 U.S. 178, 198 (1922); In re Yamashita, 30 Wash. 234 (1902); In re Hong Yen Chang, 84 Cal. 163 (1890). In 1973, the United States Supreme Court held that barring non-citizen residents from admission to the state bar violated the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. See In re Griffiths, 413 U.S. 717, 729 (1973). Since that time, Asian Americans and lawyers who are immigrants have made great contributions to the legal profession in all areas.

A person's immigration status can be based on a variety of complex factors. Being of undocumented status does not necessarily mean that an individual is of poor moral character, and does not necessarily mean that an individual crossed a border illegally or even made any misrepresentations. Many, such as the applicant, were brought to the United States as children, and may not even know that they are an undocumented immigrant. The United States Supreme Court has held that legislation causing children to suffer the consequences of their parents' undocumented status would be unjust. See Plyler v. Doe, 457 U.S. 202, 219-20 (1982). Furthermore, sometimes obtaining legal immigration status can be complex and difficult.

Just as applicants for bar admission with past criminal convictions are evaluated individually and may be, and have been, admitted to the bar, individuals of all immigration statuses should be also. The Pennsylvania courts have the authority to opt out of the federal prohibition on admitting undocumented applicants to practice. See

Matter of Application of Cesar Adrian Vargas for Admission To the Bar Of the State of New York, 131 A.D. 3d 4 (2015).

Founded in 1984, APABA-PA serves a wide network of Asian Pacific American attorneys in Pennsylvania and is dedicated to the advancement of its members and the Asian American community. Currently APABA-PA's members consist of attorneys, judges, and law students.

Therefore, we urge you to consider all applicants for bar admission on an individualized basis, regardless of immigrant status. Thank you.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bryan Tham", with a horizontal line underneath it.

Bryan Tham
President, APABA-PA (2017)