

February 15, 2013

To whom it may concern,

My name is David McGrath and I am a client of the Office of Protection and Advocacy ("P&A").

P&A is currently working in concert with The United States Department of Justice to push for reforms in the manner in which the Connecticut Bar Examining Committee ("CBEC") handles those who have, or are perceived to have, a mental disability. In this effort, P&A is addressing much more than the insidious and deleterious effects that discrimination has on its individual victims. By fighting discrimination as a barrier to entry to the practice of law, P&A is able to have an exponentially greater impact in the cause of preventing future discrimination.

In remarks made at the bar admission ceremony on June 16, 2006, Justice Zarella of the Connecticut Supreme Court declared that "[a]ll of us who are members of the bar remain, throughout the length of our careers, part of this process – the process of the communal pursuit of justice." At the bar admission ceremony on November 6, 2009, Justice Zarella emphasized that "[y]ou, as lawyers, have a social responsibility to contribute to the community in which you live. Part of that contribution entails using your gifts and talents to help those in need."

I wish that I could have been present to hear first-hand the inspiring words spoken by Justice Zarella at the latter of those speeches, and I should have been. Instead, only after six months of delay did the CBEC make the determination that I was fully fit to practice law without any conditions or restrictions. Others have not been so lucky and have been denied admission or subjected to years of discriminatory and counter-productive restrictions on their ability to practice law.

Glossing over the emotional and personal damage that being on the receiving end of such discrimination inevitably produces, discrimination cost me six months of my career. My point, however, is that this problem is bigger than me. P&A is working to prevent discrimination from delaying or preventing the admission of future lawyers. As a result of the work of P&A, lawyers who would otherwise have been delayed or denied admission to the bar due to discrimination will be free to use the unique status conferred on them by the State of Connecticut to fight for justice in their own work, as Justice Zarella envisioned in his remarks. While it is difficult to put a price tag on justice, I suspect that for each dollar the State of Connecticut allocates to P&A, it receives a substantial return on investment.

In response to outside pressure, including that applied through the work of P&A, the CBEC has recently made modest revisions to its policies. With the continued work of P&A, I am confident that the CBEC will further revise its policies so as to entirely eliminate the odious specter of discrimination from admission to practice law in Connecticut. Having personally experienced such discrimination, I can only describe the prospect of preventing it in the future as priceless.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "David McGrath".

David McGrath, Esq.