

Peoria County Bar Association Members:

We are standing in a tumultuous moment in history, and we do not mean just the effects of Covid-19. The brutal killings of George Floyd, Ahmad Aubery, and so many other Black people at the hands of law enforcement, directly challenge our system of justice that is supposed to treat everyone fairly under the law. When we were sworn into this profession, we took oaths to uphold the Constitution; and that oath will not let us turn our backs on these events. We must work to promote and rebuild the public's trust in the rule of law, while at the same time working to ensure that Peoria County and area citizens have fair and impartial access to justice.

The Peoria County Bar Association denounces all racism, both individual and systemic. Our By-laws state that this Association "is committed to fostering diversity in its membership in order to reflect the community served by its members with respect to race, color, religion, gender, national origin, ancestry, sexual orientation, disability and age." It is not just the province of the Diversity Committee to tackle these issues- it is the duty of all of us in this Association and profession. We challenge all of our members to actively foster diversity, true inclusion, and equity in our profession, and we challenge all of our members to call out injustice when they see it. We must do better, and we must demand that the system in which we operate provides equal justice under the law.

Beyond our career long learning, interpretation, and application of the law, we must also acknowledge guidance from our wise American ancestors including:

Martin Luther King, Jr. – "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

Alice Paul – "I never doubted that equal rights was the right direction. Most reforms, most problems are complicated. But to me there is nothing complicated about ordinary equality."

So where do we go from here? The Board of the PCBA is open to your suggestions and willing to listen and learn, and the following are actions that the PCBA is taking this year:

- Awarding scholarships to diverse law school students;
- Planning additional education and outreach in place of the annual Diversity Luncheon; and
- Working on a mentoring program for diverse new attorneys.

We will keep the membership informed as our plans evolve, and we encourage our members to identify steps that they can take on their own as we continue to "promote justice and facilitate the delivery of legal services to all members of the community."