

October 11, 2019

Re: Connecticut's Next Chief State's Attorney

Dear Members of the Connecticut Criminal Justice Commission:

I am writing on behalf of the George W. Crawford Black Bar Association ("Crawford"). Crawford is Connecticut's collective of Black attorneys, judges and law students. Our membership includes attorneys who practice criminal and civil law and work in the public and private sectors. Part of our mission is to enhance the role and number of Black attorneys in the state and to focus attention on legal, political and social issues which affect members of the larger Black community in Connecticut, and to address those issues as a unified body. Crawford emphatically believes that the appointment of a Chief State's Attorney will have a lasting impact on Connecticut's Black community and the legal profession. We submit our testimony for these reasons.

First, Crawford would like to thank Kevin Kane for his many years of service as Connecticut's Chief State's Attorney. He has made a lasting impact on our justice system and his work has been in line with many of the goals outlined in this testimony. Crawford desires to expand our current relationship with the Chief State's Attorney's office greatly with his successor.

Our criminal justice system has been shown to affect people of color disproportionately in all of its phases. According to a report published by the Sentencing Project, there was a 9:4 racial disparity between the imprisonments of black and white individuals in Connecticut in 2014. This is only one statistic, which measures the disproportionate affect that the criminal justice system has on people of color in our state. Further, these numbers represent a fear and growing concern in our state of an unjust system. Connecticut's Black residents face a criminal justice system where people of color are convicted and imprisoned at higher proportions than any other racial group in Connecticut and also across the United States.

For this reason, it is important that the next Chief State's Attorney be someone who understands the issues facing people of color in the criminal justice system. Someone who as a prosecutor appropriately applied the statutory sentencing guidelines in an unbiased way. Crawford trusts that the Commission will thoroughly investigate each candidate and discern the candidates' abilities to act impartially.

Crawford also stresses the importance of a candidates' professional and personal views on his or her capacity to perform their duties. Crawford similarly trusts that the Commission will ensure the next Chief State's Attorney is an individual who holds the morals and values necessary to serve in this position and who has conducted themselves in a manner consistent with those values. Our next Chief State's Attorney should be someone who cares about diversity, equity and inclusion and be interested in fostering engagement with the Black community.

Having been a voice for the Black legal community and the Black community as a whole since 1977, Crawford is open to being a resource for the Commission in its search for the next Chief State's Attorney, as well as a potential partner for the incoming Chief State's Attorney as he or she works to ensure an unbiased and fair criminal justice system in our state.

Crawford will make itself available to the Chief State's Attorney and his or her office on issues that affect the Black community and people of color. For example, Crawford would like to collaborate with the next Chief State's Attorney and police departments throughout the state to address racial profiling, to support efforts for community policing, engagement and to assist with sensitivity training. Individuals with a role in the criminal justice system including, but not limited to, prosecutors, defense attorneys, judges and police officers play a pivotal role in the administration of fair and unbiased justice. We ask that the next Chief State's Attorney be willing and able to work with Crawford to make sure the citizens of Connecticut can live safe and happy lives free from discrimination.

Respectfully submitted,

Aigné S. Goldsby, Esq.
President, George W. Crawford Black Bar Association