

## **North Carolina Bar Association 2021-22 Diversity Task Force**

### **Task Force Members**

Tawanda Foster Artis  
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### **Ex-Officio / Non-Voting**

Jason M. Hensley, Executive Director

### **Task Force Charge**

Members of the Task Force:

Thank you for accepting the call to serve. We are grateful for your willingness to engage in critical conversations and consequential work addressing the topics of diversity and inclusion within our organization and across our profession.

Diversity and inclusion are important in any bar year. Events across our nation lead us to this effort with heightened urgency as our society focuses on systemic issues concerning race, inequality and bias elimination.

NCBA has expressed a commitment to diversity as part of our mission.

### ***NCBA Mission Statement***

To serve the public and the legal profession by promoting the administration of justice and encouraging the highest standards of integrity, competence, civility and well-being of all members of the profession.

### ***NCBA Diversity Statement***

The NCBA is an inclusive organization committed to recognizing, promoting and encouraging diversity among its leadership, its membership and the entire legal community.

## ***A Description of Diversity***

Diversity is about moving toward an “environment that is respectful and responsive to the needs of each member of the community... and means understanding that each individual is unique...recognizing our individual differences....diversity allows the exploration of our differences in a safe, positive, and nurturing environment.”

*Introduction to the Final Report and Recommendations of the 2010 NCBA Joint Diversity Task Force*

## ***Thoughts on Diversity and Inclusion***

### ***The legal profession should be representative of the diverse community it serves***

Many of our diversity efforts aim toward a more diverse legal profession in North Carolina, better reflecting and representing the diversity of the people we serve. Diversity within our profession contributes to a higher level of public trust and confidence in our profession and in the fairness of our legal system.

### ***Diversity and inclusion should be a part of everything we do***

Important diversity programs are undertaken throughout our Association. The NCBA Minorities in the Profession Committee oversees and provides valuable leadership for many of these programs including a diversity and inclusion symposium, a minority pre-law conference, networking and summer associate programs for minority law students, a minority corporate counsel program, CLE panel diversity and minority attorney awards and recognitions, including Legal Legends of Color.

NCBA leadership and staff initiatives have included diversity training of bar leaders and a leadership academy emphasizing diversity participation. NCBA sections, divisions and committees also focus on diversity. Recent examples include a virtual dialogue on Race and the Pursuit of Justice, sponsored by the NCBA Dispute Resolution Section, a Racial Justice Committee within the NCBA Juvenile Justice and Children’s Rights Section and a blog series with interviews of diverse attorneys by the YLD Diversity and Inclusion Committee.

We are grateful for these initiatives and those who lead them. We also recognize that a coordinated strategy and effort to direct and guide diversity efforts across our organization can enhance these programs and support and encourage broader diversity efforts. Our organization and membership must take ownership of and responsibility for diversity and inclusion in all we do.

### ***Education and resources can help us be better informed as we pursue diversity and inclusion***

We hope our organization and our members will continue to engage in meaningful efforts to bring about positive and lasting change regarding diversity and inclusion and bias elimination. Education and resources are vital to this goal.

Through education and resources, we learn about successful diversity and inclusion work. We can be informed about and recognize implicit bias. We can gain a better understanding about the best ways to undertake difficult conversations in safe spaces. We can be better informed about how activities or subtle acts can offend or exclude. These are just a few examples of the types of educational opportunities that can enhance our diversity efforts.

### ***Community building around diversity and inclusion can benefit from new initiatives and fresh perspectives***

A renewed focus and study of our diversity and inclusion practices will help us to continue and advance many successful programs in our organization. Your work also can inform and inspire our diversity work with fresh perspectives and ideas for new initiatives that can not only help us achieve a more diverse profession but which also can positively impact the environment and systems within which diverse professionals practice and gather as a community of legal professionals.

We seek a legal community in which the attitudes and actions of our members and our organization embody acceptance, respect, and understanding of all individuals. With your dedicated work on this task force, we can help bring about the kind of future our profession and the public want and deserve.

### ***Your charge***

1. Explore options for an organization-wide approach to and coordination of our diversity and inclusion efforts.
2. Identify what we do well in our diversity and inclusion efforts and what we need to improve.
3. Identify new initiatives and ways to enhance existing initiatives to promote diversity and inclusion and bias elimination across our organization and our profession.
4. Identify ways to help our organization and our members become better informed regarding diversity and inclusion issues and practices through education and resources.