

The Arizona Supreme Court established the State Bar of Arizona and tasked it with not just regulating the practice of law but gave it a mission “to serve and protect the public with the provision of legal services and access to justice.” In turn, and pursuant to this mission, the State Bar of Arizona created the Arizona Foundation for Legal Services & Education (AZ Bar Foundation) as a separate 501(c)(3) organization in 1978, to assist in promoting access to justice for all Arizonans.

In partnership with the State Bar, the Foundation strives to fulfill this mission through shared responsibility for several joint programs impacting thousands of Arizonans each year. In 2023 alone: the Modest Means Project - a statewide reduced-cost legal help program - helped 12,300 people; Wills For Heroes – a free end-of-life care and estate planning program for first responders and their families - created 327 wills, and Mock Trial – a trial simulation program designed to engage students in the law - impacted 967 students. Additionally, during the COVID crisis, the AZ Bar Foundation and State Bar of Arizona partnered to create the Covid-19 hotline to help nearly 3,000 individuals understand changes in the law due to the pandemic.

Second, the State Bar of Arizona facilitates and provides strong support to the AZ Bar Foundation’s programs in numerous ways. In addition to financial support for expanding pro bono efforts, the State Bar organizes a member donation drive and promotes pro bono service and charitable giving to support legal aid services for low-income Arizonans.

Finally, the State Bar of Arizona serves and protects the public by building trust in the legal system through education of the public about their rights, hosting and promoting free legal clinics, and operating a public service center which receives more than 10,000 calls each year. Through all facets of its operation, the State Bar of Arizona consistently promotes trust in the legal system, access to justice and protects the public.

It is for these reasons that the AZ Bar Foundation submits this comment opposing the changes proposed in Petition R-24-0030.

Limiting the State Bar’s activities solely to attorney regulation would strip away the State Bar’s ability to partner with legal organizations and law firms to ensure that Arizona continues to promote access to justice. It would severely hinder volunteer lawyer assistance and campaigns to fund free legal help to those in need. Therefore, with great concern for the negative impact on fellow Arizonans and the AZ Bar Foundation, we respectfully request that the Court deny changes to the State Bar of Arizona as proposed in this petition.