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To the Arizona Supreme Court,

The Council on Minorities and Women in the Law (“Council,”) of the State Bar of Arizona (“State Bar”) writes to oppose the petition (“Petition”) filed by Andrew W. Gould and Emily G. Gould, entitled “PETITION TO AMEND ARIZ. SUP. CT. R. 32(A)—(M),” as it would limit the State Bar’s ability to fulfill its mission and core values, and to serve Arizona more broadly.

The proposed Rule change would essentially defund and fundamentally change the role of the State to eliminate the resources and opportunities it provides to its lawyers. This is at odds with Chief Justice Timmer’s Strategic Agenda (“Access to Justice”) and to the State Bar’s broader mission. The State Bar serves as a unifying body for all Arizona lawyers to provide support, guidance, resources, and more.

The Petition’s proposed changes to the Rules would prevent the State Bar from providing leadership and educational resources for all attorneys, especially newly admitted incoming members. For example, the State Bar runs the Bar Leadership Institute, which is an annual nine (9) month program that helps train and connect newer practitioners across the state. A number of Council members participated in the BLI before joining the Council, thereby creating a bridge for the next generation of Arizona attorneys to get involved in community leadership roles. The development of the legal field is part of the State Bar’s values and in the interest of the public.

The State Bar hosts a number of education-oriented activities that serve its mission to improve the competence and ethics of the legal field. The State Bar’s Annual Convention is a multi-day conference that addresses a range of topics from ethics to specific practice areas that help develop attorneys’ competency and professionalism. Throughout the year the State Bar offers a number Continuing Legal Education programs available to all attorneys. An attorney’s education does not end in law school, and the State Bar’s extensive educational programming helps protect Arizonans’ access to capable attorneys.

The State Bar further provides resources to those attorneys who do not have access to the large law firm resources. For example, Fast Case. It also provides access to the Member Assistance Program to assist lawyers in need. Yet another example is Practice 2.0, a confidential practice management advice program. These types of resources allow attorneys to have more tools to help Arizonans without exorbitant expense.

The State Bar is more than a regulatory institution certifying that attorneys satisfy the minimum licensing requirements. Whether it is focused groups that connect attorneys, educational resources, or establishing a leadership pathway, the State Bar provides a number of resources to its members and, by extension, Arizonans.

The Council opposed a previous Rule Petition also aimed at changing the State Bar's scope, and that rationale remains true now. The State Bar serves a critical role for lawyers and we hope that it remains so for years to come.

Respectfully,

The Council on Minorities and Women in the Law