



CENTER FOR PUBLIC INTEREST LAW
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June 20, 2018

The Honorable Hannah-Beth Jackson, Chair, and members
Senate Judiciary Committee
State Capitol, Room 2187
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: AB 3249 (Assembly Committee on Judiciary) – SUPPORT IF AMENDED

Dear Chair Jackson:

On behalf of the Center for Public Interest Law (CPIL), I write to express our general support for AB 3249 (Assembly Committee on Judiciary), and its continued efforts to institute reform at the State Bar of California.

As you know, CPIL has examined and critiqued California's regulatory agencies, including the State Bar of California, since 1980. We have served as this Legislature's monitor regarding discipline regulation, and have followed the many efforts to improve the Bar over the years. We sincerely applaud the work of this Committee, the Assembly Committee on the Judiciary, the Supreme Court, and the Bar leadership itself for moving forward with monumental reforms at the State Bar over the past year.

CPIL fully supports this bill's clarification that the Bar's public protection mandate includes support for greater access to, and inclusion in, the legal system, as well as its express legislative findings calling for the Bar to maintain its commitment to policies to enhance access, fairness, and diversity in the legal profession and the elimination of bias in the practice of law. In doing so, this bill advances the Bar closer to a public regulatory agency that embodies a more holistic service to the public at large and a more complete concentration on public protection. The bill's revisions to the State Bar Act's language to replace "members" and "dues" with "licensees" and "fees," as well as the elimination of references to an "annual meeting," are likewise critical to the transition of the Bar to a true public regulatory agency.

We also support this bill's commitment to access to justice, particularly its provision permitting attorneys to receive mandatory continuing legal education credit for pro bono legal service, which we believe is a step in the right direction to decrease the prevalent justice gap.

CPIL strongly believes that, in order to maintain a robust discipline program and maximize public protection, the Bar must be adequately funded. For that reason we strongly support the bill's provision that the State Auditor's statutory performance audit of the State Bar for 2019 should analyze whether licensing fees should be increased in 2020.

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While we are generally supportive of the bill, we are concerned that the bill proposes to amend section 6140.9 of the Business and Professions Code to divert mandatory attorney licensing fees to a private nonprofit. We do not believe that is an appropriate use of licensing fees, and for that reason urge you to amend the bill to remove section 106.

Again, thank you for your efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Bridget Fogarty Gramme". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bridget Fogarty Gramme
Administrative Director
Center for Public Interest Law

cc Hon. Mark Stone, Chair, Assembly Judiciary Committee, and Members
Leah Wilson, Executive Director, State Bar of California