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Virginia Board of Bar Examiners

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His Excellency Terence Richard McAuliffe
 Office of the Governor
 Patrick Henry Building, 3rd Floor
 1111 East Broad Street
 Richmond, Virginia 23219

Dear Governor McAuliffe:

Pursuant to Section 54.1-114 of the Code of Virginia, The Virginia Board of Bar Examiners (the "Board") submits the following biennial report:

- (i) **Summary of the Board's fiscal affairs.** In the last biennium, the Board received revenues derived from bar examination application fees, application fees for admission to the Virginia bar under the provisions of Section 54.1-3931 of the Code of Virginia (admission without examination for experienced lawyers from reciprocal jurisdictions), character and fitness investigation fees, application fees for the law reader program, admission as a foreign legal consultant, Multistate Bar Examination score transfer fees and other miscellaneous charges. The Board expended funds for expenses incurred in the performance of its statutory duties for the fiscal years ending June 30, 2015, and June 30, 2016, as follows:

	FY 2015	FY 2016
Appropriations	1,500,077	\$1,569,056
Revenue Collected	1,511,325	\$1,574,920
Interest Paid on Deposits		7576
Expenditures	\$1,498,155	\$1,569,012
Expenditure Refunds	\$134.05	
Cash with the Treasurer of Virginia	\$1,482,422	\$1,465,231
Investment in Fixed Assets	\$31,435	\$27,989

The Board is a non-general fund agency, consistent with the status of other Virginia licensing agencies. Fees, which are set by the Board, are deposited directly with the Treasurer of Virginia for credit to a Special Fund of the

Commonwealth. These fees fully offset the Board's appropriation, which is set by the General Assembly.

- (ii) **Description of the Board's activities.** The Board administers two Virginia bar examinations annually to applicants who meet the qualifications established by the General Assembly, and issues licenses to practice law in Virginia to those applicants who, by their performance on such examination, demonstrate at least the minimum level of competence expected of Virginia attorneys. The Board also evaluates the qualifications of persons applying for admission without examination to the Virginia bar under the provisions of Section 54.1-3931 of the Code of Virginia and Rule 1A:1 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia and certifies to the Supreme Court of Virginia those applicants who are qualified for admission without examination. The Board is also responsible for evaluating the qualifications of members of the military applying for admission to the Virginia bar as a Registered Military Legal Assistance Attorney pursuant to Rule 1A:6 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, foreign lawyers applying for admission as Foreign Legal Consultants pursuant to Rule 1A:7 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, and dependent spouses of active duty service members stationed in the Commonwealth applying for Military Spouse Provisional Admission pursuant to Rule 1A:8. The Board conducts a character and fitness background investigation for each applicant for the Virginia bar, whether by examination or on motion, which is designed to furnish information sufficient to satisfy the Board that such applicant is a person of honest demeanor and good moral character and possesses the requisite fitness to perform the obligations and responsibilities of a practicing attorney at law in Virginia. Additionally, the Board reviews and approves law reader program applicants and supervising attorneys, as well as monitors the program as authorized by statute (Va. Code §54.1-3926).
- (iii) **Statistical information regarding the bar exam, admission without examination and administrative hearings and decisions of the Board.** In making determinations on an applicant's character and fitness qualifications to practice law, the Character and Fitness Committee (the "Committee") on behalf of the Board conducts such further inquiries, interviews, hearings, accesses criminal history records and issues subpoenas as the Board may deem necessary. In the last biennium, the Committee held 62 such character and fitness hearings and the Board held 11 hearings involving either reviews or appeals of the Character and Fitness Committee's recommendations. Except for the hearings conducted by the Character and Fitness Committee and reviews and appeals of decisions of the Character and Fitness Committee, the Board normally holds no "administrative hearings;" rather, its activities center around the two bar examinations administered annually and the admission without examination process. The Board's admission statistics follow:

	FY 2015	FY 2016
Number of applicants taking the Virginia Bar Examination:	1861	1598
Number of applicants who passed the Virginia Bar Examination:	1223	1074
Number of applicants who passed Virginia Bar Examinations in each fiscal year and who were licensed to practice law in Virginia in the fiscal year mentioned:	1173	1025
Number of Admission Without Examination applications received:	201	231
Number of approved Admission Without Examination applicants who were admitted as attorneys by the Supreme Court of Virginia:	158	189

- (iv) **General summary of all complaints received against licensees and the procedures used to resolve the complaints.** Section 54.1-3934 of the Code of Virginia provides that the "Board may, for good cause, revoke any license issued by it at any time before there has been a qualification under it in any of the courts of this Commonwealth, but not thereafter." Because nearly all persons licensed by the Board promptly qualify before a Virginia court, the Board's practical regulatory authority with respect to its licensees is extremely limited. The Board has, to its knowledge, received no complaints during the preceding biennium about any licensees under its jurisdiction. Complaints about licensed attorneys are handled by the Virginia State Bar, a separate agency of the Commonwealth, and by the Supreme Court of Virginia.
- (v) **Description of any action taken by the Board designed to increase public awareness of Board operations and to facilitate public participation.** Because the Board's duties involve the examination, evaluation and licensure of the professional qualifications of the applicants, the opportunity for public participation is limited. The Secretary of the Board as well as its members are often interviewed by news reporters concerning its activities, and the Board makes its Rules and other information available to all upon request. The Board maintains a web site containing its Rules, Application Forms, Instructions, and answers to Frequently Asked Questions. *See* www.barexam.virginia.gov.

In addition, the Secretary and members of the Board, as well as the Director and members of the Character and Fitness Committee, have participated in forums on bar admission issues at various approved law schools in Virginia and the District of Columbia.

Respectfully submitted,

Virginia Board of Bar Examiners

By 
Secretary-Treasurer

cc: All Members of the Board
General Assembly (reportdocs@dlas.virginia.gov)