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January 6, 2020

The Reverend Al Sharpton
National Action Network
106 W. 145th Street
New York, New York 10039

The Reverend Dale D. Dennis, II
Hoyt Memorial CME Church
2800 Silverside Road
Wilmington, Delaware 19810

Dear Rev. Sharpton and Rev. Dennis:

We wish to acknowledge your recent letter to leaders of our firm about the lack of diversity in the Delaware legal profession, and your particular focus on our firm given our prominence within the Delaware bar. Your message resonates, as work remains for our firm and the legal industry broadly to provide equitable access to justice and opportunity for all, and the topic remains a priority for us.

As you noted in your letter, we proudly link our longstanding commitment to diversity and inclusion to our success as a global law firm. We stand by that, while also acknowledging that our diversity and inclusion journey is still in process. Our statistics, which we voluntarily report to industry associations, do not tell the full story about the significant qualitative strides we are making. Indeed, our intensive approach to improving diversity and inclusion helps us appreciate the contours and complexity of these issues, including the influence of larger, systemic challenges that persist in our society. They include equality of educational access, wealth disparities and longitudinal support, all issues familiar to those on the frontlines of civil rights advocacy. These issues, and others, help to inform us as we examine our approach.

For example, as a precursor to our hiring efforts, we invest heavily in initiatives that help to attract and prepare minority students from underserved communities for legal studies and careers. Our legal education pipeline efforts include:

- Skadden Honors Program in Legal Studies at the Colin Powell School at The City College of New York, established over 10 years ago with a \$9 million grant from our firm to provide eligible CCNY students with tuition assistance, LSAT preparation and pre-law course work. This program has prepared more than 250 CCNY students for law school admission; with more than 100 having already graduated or matriculated.
- Legal Outreach, a nationally renowned diversity pipeline program. For the past 11 years, we have hosted high-achieving New York City public school students for a one-week summer internship that exposes them to legal innovation projects and provides interaction with our attorneys and summer associates.

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In each of our eight U.S. offices, including, Wilmington, Delaware, we actively compete for and attract law school graduates of color who are among the best, most highly qualified professionals in the legal market. On average, our annual summer associate and first-year associate classes are approximately 40 percent students of color, outpacing the representation of law students of color enrolled in law schools. While our offices in large, diverse cities such as New York and Washington, D.C. lead the charge on hiring diverse attorney teams, we also are making progress in smaller markets such as Wilmington. Our Wilmington office participates annually in the Delaware Minority Job Fair for second- and third-year law students and serves on its organizational committee. Additionally, Wilmington joins our New York, Chicago and D.C. offices in participating in the SEO Law internship program for college graduates of color who are matriculating into law school. The office also participates in our Skadden 1L Scholars Program, which is focused on diversity and provides first-year law students with an 11-week internship (paid by our firm) that includes rotations at Skadden and a firm client. This year, our Wilmington office (which has approximately 65 attorneys) will welcome at least two law students of color as summer associates. Additionally, the Wilmington office welcomed a new full-time attorney of color last fall and looks forward to welcoming another attorney of color in the office's 2020 incoming class.

Further, we are taking a number of steps to help ensure that attorneys of color at the firm are accessing sponsorship and other critical resources to support their development, retention and advancement. One of our initiatives is our formal sponsorship program that pairs some of our highly performing associates and counsel from underrepresented backgrounds with senior firm leaders to ensure that the attorneys continue to excel and progress at the firm, while also cultivating inclusive leadership by our partners in developing talent and serving our clients. We also partner with legal and business organizations to complement the internal career development resources that we offer. Those partnerships provide our attorneys with opportunities for leadership and participation in fellowship programs, conferences and networking at some of the leading legal diversity advocacy organizations in the country. For example, one of our Wilmington partners is president and a founding member of the South Asian Bar Association of Delaware and is a catalyst for the firm's active involvement in that bar.

Over the past four years, 15 percent of our newly promoted U.S.-based partners have been people of color, including one attorney in Wilmington.

We also lean into candid conversations about racial identity as part of our diversity and inclusion programming at the firm. For example, in 2019, we hosted Dr. Eddie S. Glaude, Jr., chair of the department of African American Studies at Princeton University and author of several books, including "Democracy in Black, How Race Still Enslaves the American Soul"; and Dr. Courtney Cogburn, associate professor at Columbia University and the lead creator of "1000 Cut Journey," a virtual reality experience about racism that premiered at the Tribeca Film Festival and was developed in collaboration with the Virtual Human Interaction Lab at Stanford University. We also hosted an event for our clients and attorneys at the San Francisco De Young Museum's exhibition of "Soul of a Nation: Art in the Age of Black Power." These programs are in addition to our firm's celebration of cultural heritage months such as Women's History, Asian Pacific American Heritage, Pride and Hispanic Heritage.

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Our work to advance diversity and inclusion has been recognized by a number of our clients in the *Fortune* 100. Additionally, the NAACP LDF presented us with its inaugural “Law Firm of the Year” award, in recognition of our various efforts.

Racial and ethnic diversity together are an important dimension of diversity and inclusion. We are also focused on gender, LGBTQ+, military veterans and generational issues, and have achieved recognized inroads in those areas as well. Further, we are proud that the first two women justices on the Delaware Supreme Court were Skadden attorneys — Carolyn Berger and Karen L. Valihura.

In addition to acknowledging your letter to us, we hope our response provides you with deeper perspective on our efforts to address diversity and inclusion. We will continue our efforts in the aggregate on multiple fronts in order to make progress. As one of the largest legal employers in Wilmington and the world, we recognize and are humbled by the outsized impact we have on improving diversity in the profession. It is a responsibility and privilege we take seriously. We appreciate the energy and focus you add to this important topic, and we would welcome a meeting with both of you to discuss our mutual goals in this regard. We look forward to sharing information about our continued efforts and achievement in the future.

Sincerely,



Robert S. Saunders
Partner, Head of Wilmington Office

Cc:

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Executive Partner
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