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WRITTEN TESTIMONY OF MARLON A. PRIMES IN SUPPORT OF SB 11 PREPARED May 1, 2019

Chair Blessing III, Vice Chair Reineke, ranking minority member Clyde, and the members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, my name is Marlon A Primes, and I am the President of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (CMBA), as well as an Assistant U.S. Attorney in the United States Attorney's Office, Northern District of Ohio. The CMBA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to serving the needs of more than 5,200 legal professionals in Greater Cleveland. Our members include judges, attorneys, paralegals, business professionals and law students. Together, we serve as the collective voice of our community's legal profession, both bench and bar.

The CMBA's mission is to promote the rule of law, sustain and improve the quality of and public trust in the administration of justice and the legal profession, and enhance Greater Cleveland through member, civic and community service and leadership. One of the core values embedded in our mission is the fundamental importance of valuing and promoting diversity and inclusiveness in our membership, our profession and beyond.

As the voice of the unified bar in Cuyahoga County, the CMBA is staunchly committed to the principle of nondiscrimination. Indeed, as lawyers who take an oath of office to support the Constitution and its guarantee of equal protection, we have an obligation to be out in front, combating this pernicious issue. We need to lead not just by words, but through real, tangible action.

By leveraging the talents of our members, the CMBA offers a variety of ongoing programs and initiatives that are designed to advance true inclusion within our profession. Among those actively engaged in producing educational and networking opportunities throughout the year in this context are more than six hundred attorneys and professionals who comprise our LGBT & Allies Committee, our Women in Law Section and our Diversity & Inclusion Committee. Independently and collectively these groups seek to improve the standard of excellence in the practice of law so as to ensure the full and equal participation of all individuals — regardless of sexual orientation or expression, gender, race or ethnicity — in the justice system and the legal profession.

Examples of our efforts include:

- A groundbreaking Memorandum of Understanding signed with the other Cleveland-area bars of color, including the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, the Hispanic Bar Association, the Asian American Bar Association and the Asian Pacific Bar Association.
- Diversity Cleveland Law webpage and directory in development in partnership with the Cleveland-area bars of color.



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- Diversity & Inclusion Master Class Series, led by nationally renowned attorneys, designed to answer to specific diversity and inclusion questions.
- A collaboration with the Greater Cleveland Partnership Initiative on Economic Inclusion to develop a diversity and inclusion survey tool for law firms and legal departments that will help us measure and track progress and serve as a catalyst for best practice and toolkit building workshops aimed at improving diversity and inclusion, recruitment and retention.
- An April 11, 2018 program focusing on the current state of housing discrimination in the light of the 50th anniversary of the landmark Fair Housing Act.
- An April 24, 2018 conference presented in collaboration with Human Rights Campaign and Equality Ohio on recent developments on discrimination legislation and judicial decisions in the federal and Ohio legal systems.
- The 4th Annual International Women's Day summit that took place on March 8, and addressed issues such as defeating unconscious bias in the workplace and breaking the glass ceiling.
- Nationally acclaimed pipeline programs like The 3Rs – Rights, Realities and Responsibilities and The Stephanie Tubbs Jones Summer Legal Academy, aimed at providing substantive opportunities for minority and economically disadvantaged high school, college and graduate students interested in pursuing careers in the law by connecting them with mentors, resources and experiences to help them succeed in achieving their educational and career goals.
- An annual Midwest Diversity Career Fair held in August, which just last year attracted seventy-five law students and recent law school graduates from eighteen different law schools, including fourteen located outside of Ohio, for two-days of networking and interviews with twenty prospective employers.

Our rationale for valuing diversity and inclusion is simple – diversity and inclusion are central to the ability of every law firm, corporate legal department, court, state agency and other legal employer to innovate, attract and retain the best talent, foster productive teams, and engage diverse internal and external clients. Diverse workforces are unquestionably more effective workforces. Openness to diversity widens our access to the best talent, and inclusion allows us to engage that talent fully.

The CMBA strongly supports SB 61 because it reflects our belief that inclusion is a right for all, not a privilege for a select few.

Thank you for your consideration. Should you have any questions regarding my testimony, please feel free to contact me using the contact information below:

Marlon A. Primes

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