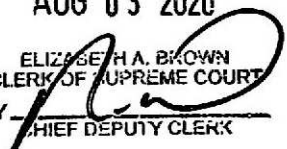


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AUG 03 2020

ELIZABETH A. BROWN
CLERK OF SUPREME COURT
BY  CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK

Supreme Court of Nevada
201 South Carson Street
Carson City, NV 89701

Honorable Justices of the Supreme Court of Nevada,

My name is Alynxandria Sartre, and I am a recent graduate of Maurer School of Law at Indiana University. I am writing to plead that you reconsider your current position and grant diploma privilege to all graduates from accredited law schools who have completed applications for the July 2020 exam, including timely applicants who have elected to take the February 2021 exam.

I have read the petition filed by Megan Ortiz, and I cannot give a better argument to support diploma privilege than the petition, in part because it covered so many topics. Instead, I will tell you my own experience and continue to hope for a reprieve. I am not among the most unfortunate during this time; I am healthy, my family members are healthy, for which I am so grateful. However, I wish so strongly that things were easier right now.

In the past few months, I have felt more responsibility on my shoulders than ever before. I am a first-generation college graduate from a single-parent household. My father is sixty-five years old and works a blue-collar job. My grandmother is a septuagenarian who takes temperatures and refuses anti-mask advocates at the entrance of Walmart. My family has no savings. There is no financial cushion to make up for my father's lost wages and no spare finances to cover my grandmother's medications. My family has never been able to afford health insurance, and I am ineligible for health insurance through my job until November. A hospital visit would force us into more debt than we could ever hope to repay.

Because of my father's age, I am currently hoping to cover our expenses alone, with the goal of reducing my father's risk of exposure. This is the first time that I have regretted choosing to go into public service, and I constantly wonder if I could afford to help my grandmother as well if I had chosen a more lucrative job. If I focus too much on these things, I feel like I'll break. The financial stress resulting from COVID-19 has also caused more conflict in my family. Not only do we fight more often, but we also try to spend time together because we really do not know how long we will be healthy. This has often meant choosing between spending eight hours studying or spending time with my family. Sometimes, even when I've chosen studying, my family interrupts because they have no other outlet for their social needs. This has also contributed to interfamily distress.

I am constantly uncertain about my own health, the health of my friends and family members, my employment, my family's financial situation, and the bar exam. I have seriously contemplated deferring until February again and again, but I cannot justify having used loans to allow myself to study for hundreds of hours only to quit now, especially when there is limited evidence that the situation will be significantly improved by the January and February study period for the February 2021 bar exam. This decision has not reduced the uncertainty and stress I have about the bar exam.

While I greatly appreciate the efforts by the Supreme Court and examiners to administer a remote exam, which would effectively protect us from transmission of COVID-19, the software issues experienced by Michigan and Indiana have decimated any confidence in the feasibility of a remote examination, the update without live proctoring has chipped away confidence in fairness during a remote examination, and the constant emails about updates act as another harsh reminder of my inadequacies at dealing with so many crises at once. At this point, I have little faith in the integrity and practicality of a remote examination, and I have constant insecurity that the bar exam will take place on August 11th and 12th (especially considering the suddenness of the last delay—only a few days before the bar exam was set to take place).

My family lacks a financial cushion to make up for the days from work that I will have to take off to take the new exam. I will also be studying while working full-time. I know that other examinees have studied while working, but I was unprepared for these additional difficulties because I had not planned for a change in examination dates and had scheduled my work around the original dates.

My mental health has always been a struggle. I was diagnosed with major depressive disorder nine years ago and have treated it with a combination of antidepressants and therapy off-and-on for nearly a decade. I have never experienced so many uncontrollable stressors as I have in the last few months. I fear that the mental health of examinees is being ignored in favor of physical health, but mental health problems can be just as lethal as physical health problems. The massive uncertainty regarding our physical health, our financial situations, our family and friends, our civil liberties and each of our individual struggles in juggling the consequences of COVID-19 have all had immense detriment on our mental welfare. The intense resistance to granting diploma-privilege, paired with the ever-changing dates, rules, expectations, and software updates have left me feeling completely ignored, and I would feel absolutely isolated if not for my personal knowledge that other examinees are experiencing the same thing. I've also experienced symptoms of agoraphobia, by which I mean I am terrified to go anywhere. I fear that a trip to the grocery store could be the reason my father gets COVID-19 and dies. I am afraid to touch packages arriving through the mail. I have avoided all unnecessary trips and I am still in constant fear that I will be the cause of my father's death. It's not a great fear to have.

Incompetent attorneys have passed previous bar exams and have later been disbarred. Anyone granted diploma privilege would be subject to the same ethical standards that would allow us to be stripped of our licenses if we are incompetent. Other states have granted diploma privilege, and Wisconsin has not seen significant changes in attorney competence in the many years that they have had diploma privilege for local graduates. In my ideal world, diploma privilege would be granted and our fees would be returned (as well as our bar review fees, although I'm aware that is out of your realm, especially considering most of us have completed the full course by now). At this point, I am willing to give up the fees for the chance at any reprieve from this chaos. I have no idea how I have made it through so much uncertainty and worry in these past few months, especially the exceptional pressure I feel to succeed for the sake of the continued health, safety, and financial security of my family members.

I would feel dishonest to not touch upon the current political sphere. I have no desire to politicize this comment, but the discord between state and federal governments (and state actors and civilians) has caused additional stress that leaves me feeling sick every time I turn on the news. Not only are there reports that federal administrators intentionally denied aid for COVID-19, but that they maliciously intended to allow Democrat-led regions to suffer and blame Democratic governors for high death tolls. Nevada has voted for the democratic primary in the last three presidential elections, and our current governor is a member of the Democratic party. As we approach November, there is increasing hostility regarding race, class, political affiliation, national origin, religion, and balance of powers. There are current speculations from well-regarded experts contemplating a collapse of checks and balances and the possibility of a new world war. If the pandemic was not enough to deal with, uncertainty about the fate of our legal system compounds the stress exponentially. I am often debating whether it is better to turn off the news and ignore current events for my own mental wellbeing, or whether I owe an obligation to my country to stay informed and do what I can to maintain balance (currently the winning choice).

I have spoken of my own difficulties, but I cannot speak for graduates of color, immunocompromised graduates, graduates who have experienced the virus either directly or through a loved one, graduates who are caring for children while daycares are inaccessible, graduates who are disabled, or many others. I can only speak of my own experience, which is far from the worst.

Diploma privilege will provide an even playing field for those who have been significantly disadvantaged by the consequences of COVID-19 and those who have the resources and fortune to be nearly unscathed by the pandemic. On top of providing relief to current applicants, it will allow us to aid current attorneys in handling the massive increase in immigration cases, constitutionality cases, landlord-tenant cases, child abuse cases (especially as schools either reopen at risk of spreading COVID-19 or close and deny children access to mandatory reporters and school-provided lunches), employee-employer cases, and personal injury cases arising from the protests. Granting diploma privilege would allow recent graduates to get involved in managing the current crises arising from COVID-19 and the protests and reduce strain on current attorneys, which will allow more clients to be served competently and thoroughly.

I will, of course, respect whatever decision this Court comes to, but I am pleading that you recognize the difficulties faced by examinees and the immense advantage that privileged students have during this pandemic (the ability to afford additional study periods, private study spaces, people to do shopping and caretaking on their behalf, childcare, healthcare, mortgage security, and on and on), as well as the immense strain on resources resulting from the chaos spurred on by COVID-19. Please reconsider your stance and grant diploma privilege to avoid a disadvantage to poorer applicants and applicants of color, many of whom wish to provide legal aid to the communities they come from.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Respectfully submitted to the clerk on this 2nd Day of August, 2020.

Alynxandria M. Sartre

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Juris Doctor, 2020

Maurer School of Law

Indiana University Bloomington