

DEAR CCPUC MEMBERS and FRIENDS

In recognition of recent events that have exposed the persistence of systemic racism in our country and to honor the importance of the Juneteenth commemoration of the end of slavery, we the Board members of the Conference of California Public Utilities Counsel (CCPUC) are writing today to express our solidarity with Black communities across the country and to speak to racism and the disproportionate risks that Black people face as a result of discrimination and police violence. Simply put, as directors of the CCPUC, we feel a strong ethical and moral obligation to fight back against racism and police brutality against Black people. While we encourage all CCPUC members to identify actions each of us can take as individuals in this fight, we believe that the CCPUC as an organization also has a role to play. In this letter, we are outlining some initial steps that the CCPUC will take to identify and address the impacts of systemic racism on each of us and the work we do collectively.

Our organization's work rarely intersects with criminal justice issues. However, as attorneys we have all sworn to support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of California; as such, we are uniquely positioned to fight back against police racism and abuse. If you are compelled to action, we encourage you to act on the information provided with this letter (attached hereto as **Attachment A**), about how you can help fight back against police violence and discrimination, whether through pro bono representation, participating in criminal justice clinics, legal observer training, or philanthropy to sponsor criminal justice attorneys.

Our work, however, does not end there. Systemic racism has deep roots in our country's history. As a result, communities of color are underrepresented in both the legal profession generally, and our practice area specifically. Going forward, we intend to plan CCPUC events and educational activities and we welcome your input on potential topics, events, or speakers on these issues – please send your thoughts or input to [tara.kaushik@hklaw.com](mailto:tara.kaushik@hklaw.com).

As attorneys practicing before the California Public Utilities Commission, we all work to ensure that **everyone** in California has access to utility services that are necessary to thrive. We have a responsibility to improve diversity in our organization and, more importantly, to work towards our profession reflecting the diversity of California. Accordingly, we will be working actively to increase the diversity of our membership and will offer CCPUC members educational opportunities regarding ways to increase representation within their organizations, including recruitment, retention, and diversity and inclusion best practices. We will also aim to change California policies in ways that will support a significant improvement to diversity and inclusion in our bar. We applaud, for example, the California Public Utilities Commission's recent announcement that it will commit to addressing racism within the agency.

We acknowledge that these actions are only first steps, and that ending systemic racism and police brutality against Black people will not be easy. However, this work is so important that the CCPUC Board unanimously approved these actions. While CCPUC members may disagree on the intricacies of regulatory law, the need to protect Black lives and promote racial equity is not a matter of dispute. For too long, we have deliberately turned a blind eye toward the injustices and indignities suffered by communities of color. We must act, and we must act now.



## **ATTACHMENT A**

The following is information about available pro bono or community volunteer opportunities. The list is not exclusive and we will aim to provide additional opportunities in the near future. If you know of any opportunities to circulate to our members, please feel free to forward them to us:

- Stanford Law Clinic, Three Strikes Project – pro bono assistance to California inmates identified for early release. Please click [here](#) for more information.
- National Lawyers Guild, Black Lives Matter is accepting donations and promoting volunteer opportunities to support the right to dissent. Please click [here](#) for more information.
- American Bar Association 21-day Racial Equity Challenge. The ABA's Labor and Employment Section is promoting a 21-day challenge which provides reading material or actions you can take for 21 days to improve racial equity around you. Please click [here](#) for more information.