



**UNITED STATES BANKRUPTCY COURT  
DISTRICT OF MASSACHUSETTS**

**Statement Regarding Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court’s  
Standing Committee on Lawyer Well-Being’s  
Report Summarizing Affinity Bar Town Hall Meetings**

The Judges and Clerk of the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Massachusetts have read the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court’s Standing Committee on Lawyer Well-Being’s [Report Summarizing Affinity Bar Town Hall Meetings](#). We recognize and accept the Report’s statement that certain attorneys “witness or experience incidents denigrating them or their clients based on their identities, they reported that such incidents impact their belief in the Massachusetts legal system, reduce their confidence that their advocacy will be heard without bias, and have a negative impact on their performance as attorneys representing their clients.” We also recognize the results of numerous studies conducted over a long period of time that have reported that persons of color have less faith that the court system will deliver impartial justice.

This Court is constitutionally and legislatively entrusted with the fair and just resolution of disputes in order to preserve the rule of law and to protect the rights and liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and laws of the United States. As such, it is imperative that all persons involved in cases before the Court, including without limitation attorneys and parties, have equal access to the Court and that the Court and its staff treat each of those persons with equal respect and dignity, regardless of race, gender, ethnicity, national origin, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, or any other unique attribute.


While the Court and its staff have engaged in training and education to support its equity, diversity, and inclusion goals and hope that those efforts have resulted in a clear demonstration of respect for the dignity of every person having business before the Court, we recognize the need to regularly challenge our assumptions and to continue to strive to reach those goals and to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within the Court itself.


For more than a decade, the Court has had an active “Diversity Initiative Task Force” that has included Court staff and volunteers from the bankruptcy bar, law schools, and affinity bars. The task force has undertaken a number of initiatives and conducts regular “pipeline” programs with the goal of encouraging diversity in the bankruptcy bar, internships, clerkships, and judicial

appointments. We will be discussing the Report with that task force as well as reviewing with the task force the Court's continuing commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion and considering additional ways to expand and implement that commitment.

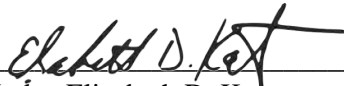
The Court's website now has a [feature](#) by which lawyers, parties, and anyone else interacting with our Court may communicate to us (anonymously if desired) any experience where any person at the Court or in one of our courthouses has fallen short of our goal of clearly demonstrating respect for the dignity of every person having business before the Court and ensuring fair and impartial treatment of every person. We welcome feedback from any person.

We share the observation of the [SJC's Standing Committee on Lawyer Well-Being](#) that we and other courts will likely make mistakes in attempting to reach our essential goals of equity, diversity, and inclusion, but we will not be discouraged in our on-going commitment to reach those goals, support professionals who may face systemic challenges or barriers to entry and advancement, and to effect meaningful change.


  
Chief Judge Christopher J. Panos

  
Judge Frank J. Bailey

  
Judge Melvin S. Hoffman

  
Judge Elizabeth D. Katz

  
Judge Janet E. Bostwick

  
Mary P Sharon, Clerk of Court

Dated: March 26, 2021