



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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June 15, 2026

Hon. Michael J. Blee, J.A.D.
Acting Administrative Director of the Courts
Administrative Office of the Courts
Attn: Proposed Amendments to Attorney Certification Regulations
Hughes Justice Complex / P.O. Box 037
Trenton, New Jersey 08625-0037

Re: Proposed Amendments to Attorney Certification
Regulations

Dear Judge Blee:

Thank you for providing additional time for the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA) to review and submit comments on the recently proposed amendments to the Regulations of the Board on Attorney Certification. The NJSBA appreciates the efforts of the members of the Board on Attorney Certification to ensure the certification program continues to serve its important purpose of providing the public with the ability to select attorneys who have undergone a rigorous process that ensures the attorney's competence in a particular certified field. The NJSBA is supportive of the Board's proposal, with two caveats explained more fully below: the NJSBA suggests a five-year review of the certification trial requirements, and the NJSBA suggests that any referral fee arrangement be *required* to be in writing, not just upon the referring attorney's request.

The NJSBA wholeheartedly agrees with the proposed expansion of the certification program into two additional areas: residential real estate law and tax court law. The NJSBA proposed the residential real estate law certification and many of its members worked on the tax court law certification. We are grateful for the efforts of the Board on Attorney Certification to work with our members to finalize both proposals.

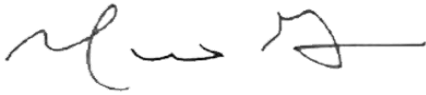
When the NJSBA first proposed a residential real estate certification in 2019, it noted that the practice of real estate law has gone through significant changes in the past few decades, and the depth and breadth of knowledge currently required to become an expert in that area of the law is substantial. The growing nuances and expertise required in tax law are similar. The creation of a certification in both subjects will reflect the growing complexity of the practice areas and serve a needed public purpose in helping to guide and protect New Jersey citizens as they navigate legal issues involving those topics.

The NJSBA is also supportive of most of the proposed amendments to the existing certification regulations, which seek to update the certification requirements to reflect current practices and trends, including a smaller number of attorneys able to meet the trial requirements in some of the certification areas. As the NJSBA noted in its 2023 correspondence advocating for the consideration of a “senior certified trial lawyer” status, there is a decrease in trial opportunities generally, making it more difficult for even the most experienced attorneys to meet the certification and recertification requirements. The NJSBA recognizes, though, the strong consumer protection purpose of ensuring individuals who earn certification status from the Court maintain stellar qualifications. We suggest, therefore, that the certification requirements, particularly the trial-related requirements, be reviewed every five years to ensure they continue to reflect the then-current state of litigation practice.

The NJSBA recognizes the ability of a certified trial attorney to pay referral fees is an important part of the certification program. The current proposal requires any division of fees to be put in writing if the referring attorney requests it. The NJSBA agrees that misunderstandings sometimes arise over the fee division arrangement. To mitigate that issue, the NJSBA further suggests that any fee division arrangement be required to be confirmed in writing, regardless of whether a confirmation in writing is requested.

Again, the NJSBA appreciates the opportunity to submit these comments. We stand ready to provide any additional information that may be needed as the Judiciary considers these important proposals.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Norberto A. Garcia', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Norberto A. Garcia, Esq.
President

cc: G. Glennon Troublefield, Esq., NJSBA President-Elect
Angela C. Scheck, NJSBA Executive Director