



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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**Contact: Yang Chen, Executive Director
(646) 653-2168**

ASIAN AMERICAN BAR ASSOCIATION OF NEW YORK CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE IMPLEMENTATION OF SECRETARY JEH JOHNSON'S RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVING RACIAL JUSTICE IN THE NEW YORK COURT SYSTEM

NEW YORK – Oct. 16, 2020 – The Asian American Bar Association of New York (“AABANY”) calls on Chief Judge Janet DiFiore of the New York Court of Appeals and the Office of Court Administration to immediately implement recommendations made in Secretary Jeh Johnson’s report on Equal Justice in the New York State Courts. Jeh Johnson, a partner at Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison and a former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, was tapped by Chief Judge DiFiore on June 9, 2020 to lead a review of racial bias in the New York State court system in response to a national movement for increasing racial justice across America and recent reports of racial bias by court employees. Secretary Johnson’s team produced a wide-ranging report, which was publicly released yesterday, recommending an overhaul of the court system’s process for handling issues of racial bias.

“We applaud and thank Secretary Johnson for his efforts in highlighting deficiencies in the Court System’s ability to address racial bias,” says AABANY President Sapna Palla. “While we welcome this much-needed introspection from the Court, we also urge the Court’s leadership to accept and enact Secretary Johnson’s recommendations. We eagerly await to see how the Courts implement these reforms and are ready to assist in any way we can.”

As part of his study, Secretary Johnson convened meetings with bar associations, judicial associations, court employee unions, court reform organizations, and affinity groups. His team also received input from hundreds of court employees, litigators, and other stakeholders. AABANY representatives and leaders met with Secretary Johnson on August 14, 2020. AABANY was represented by President Sapna Palla; Executive Director Yang Chen; William Wang, former President of AABANY and co-chair of AABANY’s Judiciary Committee; Rena Malik, co-chair of AABANY’s Judiciary Committee; Dai Wai Chin Feman, an AABANY Director and Judiciary Committee co-chair; L. Austin D’Souza, President-Elect of the South Asian Bar Association of New York (SABANY); Joe Gim, Deputy Chief of the County Court Trial Bureau at Nassau County District Attorney’s Office and co-chair of AABANY’s Prosecutors’ Committee; David Chiang, Section Chief, Community Partnerships Division, Queens District Attorney’s Office and co-chair of the Prosecutors’ Committee; and AABANY Legal Interns Annie Tan and Ephany Wang.

AABANY made the following recommendations to Secretary Johnson:

- to ensure greater transparency and accountability of its hiring and promotional practices, the Unified Court System should publish data, broken down by ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, gender, etc., related to the hiring, promotion, and retention of its judges and non-judicial personnel on a regular basis;

- the Court System should promote the efforts of independent organizations such as the Franklin H. Williams Judicial Commission, one of the nation's first organizations dedicated to promoting racial and ethnic fairness in the courts;
- the Court System should mandate formal cultural sensitivity, racial bias, and inclusiveness training for all judicial and non-judicial personnel throughout the state;
- the Court System should streamline and increase awareness of its process for investigating complaints of racial bias and it should track and publish data regarding such complaints;
- the Court System should emphasize diversity on panels dedicated to hiring and promotional decisions concerning both judicial and non-judicial personnel within; and
- the Court System should provide more and better language interpreters for attorneys, parties, and jurors that appear before the Court to ensure that all Americans can meaningfully participate in the judicial process.

AABANY is pleased to see that its recommendations were incorporated into Secretary Johnson's report, which also called for addressing juror bias; adopting a media policy against racially insensitive statements; enhancing trust between court officers and the community; and other reforms.

Secretary Johnson's full report is available online:

www.nycourts.gov/whatsnew/pdf/SpecialAdviserEqualJusticeReport.pdf.

For more information, please contact Yang Chen, AABANY Executive Director, at (646) 653-2168, or direct any inquiries to main@aabany.org.

The Asian American Bar Association of New York is a professional membership organization of attorneys concerned with issues affecting the Asian Pacific American community. Incorporated in 1989, AABANY seeks not only to encourage the professional growth of its members but also to advocate for the Asian Pacific American community as a whole. AABANY is a New York regional affiliate of the National Asian Pacific American Bar Association (NAPABA).

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