



NEW JERSEY STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

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March 31, 2020

Christopher C. Krebs
Director Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528-0380
By email: christopher.krebs@hq.dhs.gov

Re: Access to Critical Legal Services during Coronavirus (COVID-19) Pandemic

Dear Mr. Krebs:

On behalf of the New Jersey State Bar Association (NJSBA), I write to request this agency notify state and local jurisdictions that lawyers and law firms should be deemed essential critical infrastructure workers during the COVID-19 pandemic. The American Bar Association wrote to you previously about this issue and we endorse that request and ask that you consider additional reasons why lawyers of this country are essential.

We recognize and respect that our government must take necessary actions to slow the spread of this health crisis during these unprecedented times. We also acknowledge that each of us will be required to sacrifice to ensure that we limit the damage, both human and economic, that will be caused by this pandemic.

Lawyers and law firms are an integral part of ensuring that people have access to justice, especially in these critical and uncertain times. Already, lawyers are being inundated with client needs that range from domestic violence, child custody and matrimonial issues; to landlord and tenant matters; to employment issues from both employers and employees; to credit and financial issues; to contract issues that include medical and life insurance questions to business insurance disputes, to name only a few.

The NJSBA is the largest voluntary association of lawyers, judges and legal professionals in the state. We are prepared to engage our mass disaster program, a statewide effort that has been called in to action for other statewide emergencies, like Superstorm Sandy and 9/11, to help ensure that victims of this pandemic have access to a lawyer. As officers of the Court, however, we have the ethical and professional responsibility to provide representation using all means necessary to help people achieve critical results and have access to justice.

As you well know, state and local jurisdictions have promulgated orders designed to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus and protect their residents and vulnerable populations, New Jersey among them. These directives include exemptions that allow "essential services" to continue operations in support of critical infrastructure sectors in their geographic regions. State and local leaders have used their individual discretion to define who is included in their essential workforces. We request that you provide uniform guidance that legal services should be deemed essential services in state directives.

The residents of this nation and the businesses that are its economic engine deserve effective counsel prepared to assist them, with every tool they have available, as they navigate through these uncharted waters.

Respectfully,

Evelyn Padin
President

C: Senator Cory Booker
Senator Robert Menendez
Judy Perry Martinez, Esq., ABA President