



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Brad Hoylman-Sigal

Senator Brad Hoylman and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon Announce Legislative Roundtable On Diploma Privilege And COVID-19 Impact On Law School Graduates

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Senate Judiciary Chair Brad Hoylman (D/WF-Manhattan) and Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon (D/WF-Brooklyn) announced today that they will be convening a roundtable discussion on Tuesday, August 18 about the impact of COVID-19 on recent law school graduates, New York's plan to administer an online bar exam in October, and alternate pathways to attorney admission, including diploma privilege.

The livestream will take place on Tuesday, August 18 at 10:00AM available on <https://www.nysenate.gov/events>.

Senator Hoylman and Assembly Member Simon sponsor legislation (S.8682-A/A.10794 and S.8827-A/A.10846) to create a form of diploma privilege during the COVID-19 State of Emergency to allow admission of law school graduates as attorneys in New York without having to take the Uniform Bar Examination (UBE).

Next week's roundtable will allow state legislators and the viewing public to hear directly from law school graduates whose lives and professional plans have been upended by the

COVID-19 pandemic.

Invited panelists include: recent law school graduates, a representative of the New York Board of Law Examiners, Cornell Law School Dean Eduardo Peñalver, Prof. Deborah Jones Merritt of Ohio State University's Moritz College of Law, and Association of Legal Aid Attorneys President Jared Trujillo.

Senator Hoylman said: “It seems the most important group has been left out of the discussions in New York about whether to proceed with this year’s bar exam: the law graduates themselves. In this upcoming legislative roundtable, I'm eager to hear from recent law grads, as well as academic experts on how we should be admitting this new generation of attorneys into the legal profession during these uncertain times when lawyers are going to be more important than ever to our communities. I’m also looking forward to joining my colleague Assembly Member Jo Anne Simon in discussing our legislation to establish diploma privilege.”

Assembly Member Simon said: “We need to carefully examine the current plan to have an online exam for the State bar this Fall, and the reliability and accessibility barriers that may come along with that approach. Many recent law graduates have taken on enormous student debt or have found their anticipated jobs have evaporated, and we need to ensure that they can equitably and safely begin to practice law. I’m looking forward to hearing more from law graduates and experts at the upcoming legislative roundtable with Senator Hoylman, and to discuss our bill to establish diploma privilege.”

The New York Bar Exam is normally held twice a year, in February and July. This year, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the two day, in-person exam originally scheduled for July was postponed until September, then cancelled and replaced with an online exam currently scheduled for October 5-6. Among the topics to be discussed at next week’s roundtable are the lingering questions and concerns about the inclusiveness, accessibility, and reliability of

an online bar exam.