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Delaware Supreme Court releases study on alternative pathways to bar licensure; appoints Commission on Pro Bono and Public Service

The Delaware Supreme Court task force reviewing alternative pathways to bar licensure—that is pathways that do not include passing the traditional bar exam—has completed its work, and the court has released its report.

"Both personally and on behalf of the Supreme Court, I want to thank all the task force members for their dedicated work over the past year," said Justice Gary Traynor, who headed up the Bar Licensure Task Force. "This report produced a wealth of data and information that will inform the court's continuing work on the admissions process and access to justice." The full report has been posted on the court's website's publications page. Following a review and discussion of the report and its findings, the Supreme Court is pausing its study of alternative pathways for now and will focus on addressing some of the underlying access-to-justice issues through a Commission on Pro Bono and Public Service. Establishing the commission was proposed by two key members of the task force; Dean Todd J. Clark of Delaware Law School at Widener University and Dean Jan R. Jurden of the Farnan School of Law at Wilmington University, who will now act as co-chairs of the Pro Bono Commission. Justice Traynor said that, although the concept of alternative pathways to licensure is gaining traction nationwide, the scarcity of the required human resources and the lack of support among members of the Delaware bar make a pilot effort unrealistic at this time.

The commission will undertake analyzing the gaps in needed civil legal services in Delaware for those who can't afford an attorney and shortfalls in attorneys in rural areas and public sector positions. It will then craft strategies to address those issues, particularly the need for attorneys within the Department of Justice, Office of Defense Services, and other public service agencies. Justice N. Christopher Griffiths will act as the Supreme Court's liaison to the commission.

The Supreme Court has directed the commission to produce a strategic plan by June 30, 2027, and provide annual updates to the Chief Justice every year thereafter. The order establishing the commission can be found on the court website.