

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
JANUARY 8, 2025

Testimony of the State Board of Law Examiners  
SENATE BILL NO. 2053

Chair Larson and members of the Committee, I am Petra Mandigo Hulm, Clerk of the Supreme Court, Secretary/Treasurer of the State Board of Law Examiners, and Secretary of the Disciplinary Board for lawyers. I manage the State Board of Law Examiners. I am appearing on behalf of the Supreme Court and the State Board of Law Examiners related to Senate Bill 2053.

The State Board of Law Examiners, through the Court System, is requesting to increase the application fee for the bar examination. The fee is \$150 and has not been increased since 1997. At that time, the legislature allowed an increase in the exam fee from \$50 to \$150. We are requesting an increase to \$200.

The exam is given to approximately 100 examinees per year and the total collected for timely applicants is approximately \$15,000. That amount does not cover expenses for administration of the examination. Examples of the costs involved include staff time, payment of proctors, payment of graders of the exam, the cost of the exam itself, supplies, and facility costs. The cost for us to buy the exam itself is \$132 per exam for standard non-accommodated exams. The cost for a venue is approximately \$4,000. In legislative years, we pay for locations for the February and July examinations. In non-legislative years, we pay for a location for the July examination due to the number of test takers. A significant amount of staff time goes into planning and administering the two-day bar examination. Additional days of examination occur with examinees with non-standard accommodated test takers.

Additionally, the Supreme Court adopted the new NextGen Bar examination starting in 2027. The cost of the exam is increasing at least \$50 per examinee. The National Conference of Bar Examiners, the entity from whom we buy the examination, has informed jurisdictions that it is losing money on its first vendor contract providing the electronic exam. We have been informed that future increase is likely beyond 2027.

Finally, North Dakota, I believe, has the lowest exam fee of all jurisdictions, even with the requested increase. Surrounding states are higher; Montana is \$620, South Dakota is \$450, and Minnesota is \$600 for a first-time test taker.

We respectfully request the committee vote a due pass for the amendment.