



# MICHIGAN COURTS NEWS RELEASE

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## **Board of Law Examiners Releases July 2020 Bar Examination Results**

*Pass Rates Higher than July 2019 for First Remote Bar Exam in Nation*

LANSING, MI, October 27, 2020 – The Board of Law Examiners released the July 2020 bar examination results today. The Board administered the nation’s first one-day remote, essay-only exam instead of an in-person exam due to health concerns arising from the COVID-19 pandemic. Before appeals, 68 percent of the applicants passed, while 79 percent of those taking the exam for the first time passed. These pass rates were higher than those in July 2019, when the overall pass rate was 60 percent, and 69 percent for first time takers before appeals

“Congratulations to all who passed the exam. Your success reflects dedication, hard work, and a commitment to excellence that will carry forward in your careers as members of the legal profession,” said Justice Brian K. Zahra, the Court’s liaison to the Board. “While other jurisdictions delayed or canceled their exams, Michigan’s first-in-the-nation remote bar exam was a success and overcame every challenge.”

The exam was held on July 28, 2020, the normal time for administering the summer bar exam, allowing for examination and licensure in the ordinary course. The 15-question essay exam was administered in five one-hour modules to a total of 723 applicants, up from 641 in July 2019. All of the test takers completed the exam, including 32 applicants who were accorded accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

For the July 2020 exam, an applicant with an average essay score (6.71) passed the exam. This overall essay average was slightly higher than the July 2019 average.

Some applicants experienced a delay in accessing module 2, which online test administrator ExamSoft advised was due to a malicious cyber-attack on its website (which is being investigated by federal authorities). The Board’s expert in high-stakes testing, Dr. Mark Reckase, performed an in-depth analysis of the essay scores and found no statistical evidence to suggest the delay had detrimental effect. For example, the data show the delay did not negatively impact overall performance on module 2 or on the remainder of the exam.

“I admire the test takers for their courage and focus to work through the delay,” said Justice Zahra. “I am grateful to the team and the Board and to everyone who worked tirelessly to make sure that the administration of the test was as smooth as possible and that everyone completed the test. While the delay causes concern that merits further investigation, today, we can be proud that Michigan blazed a new trail and that our profession will soon benefit from these talented lawyers.”

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