

## STATEMENT OF THE DUKE LAW CLINICAL FACULTY

After a bitter and polarizing election, we want to reaffirm to our entire community some of our most essential values. We believe these values are self-evident and based on unifying principles. Nonetheless, they bear repeating at this time:

### **We Have an Obligation to Meet the Legal Needs of Those Without Access.**

Nationally, and in North Carolina, fewer than one in five low-income people are able to get a lawyer to meet their legal needs. Working together, the students and faculty of the Duke Law Clinical Program constitute one of the largest providers of free legal services to limited resource individuals and communities in North Carolina and beyond. We are committed to leveraging our privileged status as lawyers, teachers and members of the Duke Law faculty to expand access to justice for all of those in our communities who otherwise lack access to legal resources, including a caring, committed advocate.

### **We Must Consistently Work to Secure Human Rights and Achieve the Promise of Equal Justice.**

Going beyond the essential provision of direct legal services to those who cannot afford them, we are committed to working in solidarity with individuals, groups and communities who are or have traditionally been disenfranchised, victimized and excluded. Collectively, we are dedicated to vindicating the rights of these clients and partners, including those rights guaranteed under the Constitution, such as the freedom of speech, the free exercise of religion, the right of assembly, and the equal protection of the laws. We are also dedicated to working collaboratively with our clients and partners to impact the social, economic, legal and political structures that restrict opportunity, undermine dignity, limit agency, and thwart inclusion. Together, we seek to ensure that all are able to participate fully and equally in our local, state, national and global communities.

### **We Have a Special Responsibility to be Actively Engaged Public Citizens.**

As provided in the Preamble to North Carolina's Rules of Professional Conduct, as well as in the American Bar Association's Model Rules of Professional Conduct, lawyers are members of a learned profession with a deep and abiding responsibility to defend, sustain and improve the values, norms and institutions on which a constitutional democracy depends. This responsibility includes an insistence on governance systems that are transparent and that prioritize the public interest, zealous advocacy for civil and human rights, and the fierce defense of civil liberties and the rule of law.

With humility and resolve, we pledge to work with courage, compassion and creativity in furtherance of these essential values.

Respectfully,

The members of the Duke Law Clinical Faculty