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CMBA Announces Inclusion Innovation Award Winners

CLEVELAND – May 17, 2016 – The [Diversity & Inclusion Committee](#) of the Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association (CMBA) is pleased to announce the recipients of this year's Inclusion Innovation Awards. The honorees will be recognized formally at the Diversity & Inclusion Conference titled "Walking the Talk Boldly Into the Future" on Friday, May 20 at the CMBA Conference Center.

Recipients of the Inclusion Innovation Awards are selected by the Diversity & Inclusion Committee for their efforts in promoting diversity and inclusion in the workplace and throughout Cleveland. In selecting this year's honorees, the Committee chose to focus on three excellent examples of work being done by those in the government sector here in our community.

"These awards provide us the opportunity to recognize and celebrate those who are positively contributing to the creation of a culture of inclusiveness in our area," said Majeed G. Makhoul, CMBA Vice President of Diversity & Inclusion and Chair of the Diversity & Inclusion Committee. "We salute our honorees for demonstrating success in delivering positive results in important diversity and inclusion initiatives that impact so many."

The 2016 Inclusion Innovation Award winners are:

- Meena Morey Chandra, regional director of the Cleveland office of the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights
- Pernel Jones, Jr., director of community relations for the Pernel Jones and Sons Funeral Home, and vice president of the Cuyahoga County Council
- Carole S. Rendon, acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio

"We thank these individuals for their commitment to promoting inclusion in our community," said Anne Owings Ford, CMBA President. "Each honoree has demonstrated leadership and commitment that should inspire all of us to continue to confront and remove barriers to achieving diversity and inclusion in Greater Cleveland and beyond."

Additional information on each honoree:

Meena Morey Chandra – Access to Schools as a Path to Inclusion

Chandra is the regional director of the Cleveland office of the United States Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights (OCR). Serving both Ohio and Michigan, Chandra leads the efforts of an office of 40 civil rights attorneys and investigators that work to investigate and resolve civil rights complaints in schools. Day in and day out, her office fights for students with disabilities to gain access to a meaningful and harassment-free education, as well as discrimination issues affecting students because of race, color, national origin, gender, and age.

Pernel Jones, Jr. – Access to Economic Inclusion

Jones is the director of community relations for the Pernel Jones and Sons Funeral Home, and he currently serves as the vice president of the Cuyahoga County Council. Councilman Jones has been a tireless advocate for inclusion in the County's contracting and business processes. He worked on the Economic Inclusion Task Force in 2011 and sponsored the County's Disparity Ordinance, which required Cuyahoga County to conduct a disparity study of its business practices as it relates to minority and women businesses. Councilman Jones' efforts led to the County's recent adoption of business economic inclusion programs. He also has been an advocate of preparing the next general of minority business leaders, leading the effort to fund the "Closing the Achievement Gap (CTAG)" mentoring and parent training program.

Carole S. Rendon – Access to Justice Starts on the Street

Rendon is the acting United States Attorney for the Northern District of Ohio. From 2009 through 2016, she served as the First Assistant United States Attorney for the office, the first woman to hold that position. During her tenure as First AUSA, approximately 70 percent of hires were of minority or women applicants. Rendon was lead

counsel on U.S. v. City of Cleveland, an exhaustive lawsuit involving the Cleveland Division of Police which resulted in a blueprint for reform within the Division. The consent decree between the City of Cleveland's police force and the Department of Justice mandates sweeping changes in training, programs, technology and data management practices, and an independent monitor to ensure that the goals of the decree are met, leading to improved relationships in the Cleveland community. Along with her role in this national model for police reform, Ms. Rendon served as lead counsel in litigation that resulted in enforcement of the Voting Rights Act and implementation of bilingual ballots in both Cuyahoga and Lorain counties. Ms. Rendon truly has created access to justice—starting at the street level—throughout her stellar career.

About the Diversity & Inclusion Conference

The CMBA's Diversity & Inclusion Committee presents the 2016 Diversity & Inclusion Conference: Walking the Talk Boldly Into the Future. At the conference, which begins at 8:30 a.m., the Committee will share the results and key takeaways about the Cleveland legal community from our Diversity & Inclusion 2.0 Organizational and Individual Survey Project, designed to establish benchmark data to show where we stand.

Phase I of the survey initiative began in October 2015 with the launch of an organizational survey to more than 300 law firms, corporate legal departments, courts and public law offices in Northeast Ohio. Phase II occurred in February 2016, and involved the distribution of individual surveys to nearly 8,500 lawyers and legal professionals in the same geographic area.

The Conference will include the release of this data and information on a successful and innovative best practice model program combining collective commitment, goal setting, action and accountability.

In addition, the Diversity & Inclusion Conference will feature nationally-recognized author and keynote speaker, Verna Myers for a dynamic and insightful talk on unconscious bias and its role in impeding progress.

www.CleMetroBar.org/Diversity

About the CMBA

The nonprofit Cleveland Metropolitan Bar Association operates as a center for legal professionalism in the region, promoting the highest ethical and professional standards. Serving the largest legal community in the state, the CMBA has nearly 6,000 members. Learn more at www.CleMetroBar.org.

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