



# Letter from the Chair

**Sheila S. Boston** is a Partner in the Product Liability Group of Arnold & Porter Kaye Scholer LLP's New York City office, concentrating on class-action and products liability issues, with an emphasis on pharmaceutical and medical device products. A passionate advocate of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Ms. Boston has published articles on DEI issues as well as product liability topics. She is the Immediate Past President of the New York City Bar Association and currently serves as the Chair of DRI's Drug and Medical Device Committee.

It was truly marvelous to see so many of you in Nashville on September 7th-9th for our in-person Drug and Medical Device Seminar! It was just what "the doctor ordered" after three and a half years of being apart and only convening virtually. I know that I certainly had a wonderful time, and I hope that you did as well. I enjoyed the CLE presentations -- everything from hearing about juror perceptions and lessons learned from trials in 2021, to learning about genetics and genomics, to gleanng wisdom from judges about MDLs and mass tort coordination, to laughing out loud during Lana Varney's educational but entertaining ethics presentation on defense group agreements. Moreover, we lived up to our reputation and legacy for having spectacular networking events. I heard that the private tour of the Ryman Auditorium was fantastic. (I tried to register for the event, but it was already sold out!) I danced and ate delicious tacos at the festive Old Smoky reception. I networked and enjoyed the party held at the Country Music Hall of Fame venue. (However, I was so caught up talking with people that I missed out on the free tour of the museum!) And then it was great to cap off the seminar by "doing good" and participating in our community service project.

For our "DRI Cares" project this year, we painted butterfly houses to give hope and inspiration to cancer patients and their families, courtesy of Alive Hospice. We chose this nonprofit to honor our dearly departed DMD Steering Committee member, Mark Myhra. Mark last worked in the legal department of Boston Scientific. He was a dedicated member of our committee. He not only attended but helped to plan our annual seminars for at least a decade. And he often participated in our community service projects, as he was a man of Faith who believed in helping and giving back to others in need. Mark unfortunately passed away as a result of pancreatic cancer last year, and as was intimated in the short memorial we had for him at the seminar, he will be greatly missed. If you have not already given a financial donation to Alive Hospice in his honor, I urge you to do so as soon as possible. To donate, click the "Donate" button below. Select from one of the gift amounts or "other" to set your own amount, and then choose "Drug and Medical Device -- Nashville Service Project" from the My SLC/Region dropdown box.

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Many of you may have noticed that we were somewhat heavy handed in including Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) presentations at this year's seminar. There were three individual TED-style talks on the subject, as well as an in-house counsel panel. As many of you know, I am an ardent advocate of DEIB. But I must admit that it was not I who served as the primary catalyst for this to take place at our seminar this year. I did, however, wholeheartedly support each and every one of the presentations. I think it is quite laudable and noteworthy that we spent so much quality time on DEIB. Addressing the marginalization of historically underrepresented people in our profession is a testament to our entire 2022 DMD Seminar planning committee. I was honored to give one of the "Quick Hits: Diversity & Inclusion in the Legal Profession" presentations, and I shared how there is now a long legacy of leadership which has shaped and advocated for diversity and inclusion within the ranks of our DMD Committee. Leaders such as Scott Saylor, Jim Rogers, Carter Thompson, Sara Gourley, and Gail Rodgers have played prominent roles in bringing this to fruition. DEIB has truly become a core value of the DMD Committee, and for that I am truly grateful.

I am now Chair of the prominent DRI DMD Committee, and it is not by accident but by design. I am in my current position because of certain white male allies who made a commitment to DEIB and engaged in intentional succession planning. I am both humbled and grateful for this opportunity and promise that I will continue to carry the torch and advocate for greater diversity and inclusion not only within the DMD Committee and DRI, but in our profession at large. As a woman of Faith, I know that it is one of the reasons God has blessed me to be in certain prestigious circles and to rise to different professional heights. I am one who has a sincere love for people, and I believe in respecting my fellow human beings and promoting justice for all.

I must say that I am also proud to serve our clients and work in the pharmaceutical and medical device industry such that lives can be enhanced and even saved. If people did not have respect for the industry before the COVID-19 pandemic began, I certainly hope that they now have at least a modicum of awareness and gratitude for the important role our clients served in developing vaccines, medications, and other medical products to help us endure and in many respects overcome a tremendously challenging time in our collective lives. Now, more than ever before, the words of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. are resonating with me: "all life is interrelated . . . somehow, we're caught in an inescapable network of mutuality tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly." As human beings we are facing many worldwide problems which need to be resolved -- diseases and health pandemics, hunger and homelessness, climate change, and the list goes on and on. These are big ticket items challenging all of humanity, and we cannot afford to leave human intellect, talent, and creativity undeveloped and under-utilized. It is a moral matter to treat people with dignity, but it is also just good business sense to get serious about diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging in our workplaces. So, I am calling on all of you to join us in this endeavor.

I would be remiss if I did not express my profound gratitude for those with whom I work very closely in the leadership of our committee: Erik Snapp of Dechert LLP (Committee Vice Chair), Jeni Heis of Ulmer & Berne LLP (Seminar Program Chair) and Archie Reeves of McDowell Knight Roedder & Sledge, LLC (Seminar Program Vice Chair). The 2022 DMD Seminar in Nashville is now in our rearview mirror, and it is time to plan again and set our sights on the 2023 DMD Seminar, which will resume in its traditional month of May. We will be in NOLA (New Orleans, Louisiana) on May 3rd-5th, 2023. So please mark your calendars accordingly, and I look forward to seeing all of you again soon!

In Service,

*Sheila S. Boston*