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## **Nakhia Crossley Sworn-In as BWLA President: Committing to Honor the Organization's Founders While Empowering Members to Boldly Shape the Future of the Legal Profession**

**Chicago, IL:** On Tuesday, June 15, 2021, Nakhia Crossley was sworn-in as the Black Women Lawyers' Association of Greater Chicago, Inc.'s (BWLA) 30<sup>th</sup> President by the Honorable LaShonda A. Hunt, U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Northern District of Illinois.

Since its founding in 1987, BWLA has established itself as one of the fastest growing bar associations in Illinois, garnering a stellar reputation in the legal community for its dedication to its members, law students and the greater Chicagoland community through stellar programming, mentoring, community outreach, scholarship awards, pipeline programs and networking.

With her mother proudly observing from the audience, Ms. Crossley reflected on her journey to the legal profession, crediting her mom's influence as well as BWLA impact on her career noting: *"I'm honored to serve as BWLA's 30th President for its 35th anniversary. BWLA has been hugely instrumental to the success of my career."*

Esteemed BWLA lifetime member and managing partner of Cleveland Avenue, Andrea Zopp, was the keynote speaker at the swearing-in ceremony and provided inspirational remarks about the Black women lawyer trailblazers who have been members of BWLA throughout its history; encouraging those in attendance to continue in their historic footsteps. Candace Jackson-Akiwumi, longtime BWLA member and President Joe Biden's nominee for a seat on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Seventh Circuit, introduced Ms. Crossley and in her remarks, proudly highlighted the numerous awards and significant contributions Ms. Crossley has made to BWLA, the Greater Chicago community at large, and in the energy industry in her current role as central region director and counsel for the Solar Energy Industries Association (SEIA).

During the 2021-2022 BWLA bar year, Ms. Crossley will lead the organization beyond the pandemic and civil unrest and injustice of the past year by taking a *"true heart and health check,"* exploring what life looks like beyond the pandemic and offering relevant programming tailored to help BWLA members adapt to their new normal, both professionally and personally, noting: *"We've been forever changed by what we've experienced and endured during the past year and we must embrace that."*

Ms. Crossley also shared her vision for celebrating BWLA's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary, honoring its founders and celebrating the accomplishments of its esteemed members, both past and present, while also looking to the future and offering continuing legal education and other programmatic opportunities to help members forge a successful path to law firm partnership.

This bar year, BWLA will not return to *"normal."* Instead, under the stewardship of Ms. Crossley and the newly elected Officers and Directors (listed below), BWLA will embrace new post-pandemic opportunities and possibilities beyond perceived limitations and boldly lead and empower its members to shape the future of the legal profession.

**2021-2022 BWLA Officers and Directors:**

Nakhia Crossley, *President*  
Elsa Andrianifahanana, *Vice President*  
Weeya Young, *Recording Secretary*  
Era Laudermilk, *Corresponding Secretary*  
Amber Bennett, *Treasurer*  
Christian Conway, *Parliamentarian*  
Kina Arnold, *Board Member at Large*  
Shannon Stokes, *Board Member at Large*  
Ashley Vanardo, *Board Member at Large*  
Arielle Williams, *Board Member at Large*  
Kenyatta Beverly, *Ex-Officio*

**2021-2022 BWLA Scholarship Fund Board Members:**

Jasmine Fannell, *Chair*  
Michelle Speller-Thurman  
Erica Kirkwood  
Samya Abdela  
Merili (Mariangela)Seale  
Nakhia Crossley  
Elsa Andrianifahanana  
Weeya Young  
Era Laudermilk  
Amber Bennett  
Christian Conway  
Kenyatta Beverly

\*\*\*The Black Women Lawyers' Association of Greater Chicago, Inc.'s mission includes identifying and addressing issues unique to African American women lawyers, judges and academics; improving the administration of justice by increasing the participation of African-American women and other minorities throughout the legal system; and advancing civil and human rights.\*\*\*

***If you would like additional information about the Black Women Lawyers' Association of Greater Chicago, Inc., please contact Corresponding Secretary Era Laudermilk at (708) 250-0833 or email [administrator@bwla.org](mailto:administrator@bwla.org)***