

**BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL,	:	No. 108 DB 2022
Petitioner	:	
	:	File No. C4-21-217
v.	:	
	:	Attorney Registration No. 20133
GEORGE W. BILLS, JR.	:	
Respondent	:	(Allegheny County)

ORDER

AND NOW, this 15th day of September, 2022, in accordance with Rule 208(a)(5), Pa.R.D.E., the determination by a Review Panel of the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania, in the above captioned matter is accepted; and it is

ORDERED that the said GEORGE W. BILLS, JR. of Allegheny County, be subjected to a **PUBLIC REPRIMAND WITH CONDITION** by the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania as provided in Rule 204(b) and Rule 205(c)(8) of the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement.

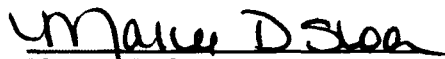
At least ten (10) days prior to the imposition of the Public Reprimand, Respondent shall submit to the Board Prothonotary and Disciplinary Counsel proof that he has refunded Ms. Baum the sum of \$600.

Failure to comply with the above Condition shall be grounds for reconsideration of this matter and prosecution of formal charges against Respondent under the specific provision of Enforcement Rule 204(b). Costs shall be paid by the Respondent.

BY THE BOARD

Board Chair

TRUE COPY FROM RECORD
Attest:


Marcee D. Sloan, Prothonotary
The Disciplinary Board of the
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

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PUBLIC REPRIMAND

George W. Bills, Jr., you appear before the Disciplinary Board for the imposition of a Public Reprimand ordered by the Board on September 15, 2022. As a condition to this reprimand, the Board ordered that you refund \$600 to your client's mother prior to the administration of this reprimand. It is an unpleasant task to publicly reprimand one who has been granted the privilege of membership in the bar of the Commonwealth. Yet as repugnant as this task may be, it has been determined necessary that you receive this public discipline.

Mr. Bills, this matter concerns your professional misconduct during your representation of Zackary Gomolka. In May 2020, Mr. Gomolka, along with his wife and mother, Tisha Baum, met with you to consult about representation for Mr. Gomolka in his DUI matter. You advised that you would represent Mr. Gomolka through the conclusion of his criminal matter for a fee of \$1,200. Although you had not regularly represented Mr. Gomolka, you failed to communicate to him in writing the basis or rate of your fee, either before or within a reasonable time after commencing the representation. Ms. Baum paid a portion of your fee by check and a portion in cash. You failed to deposit any portion of the \$1,200 fee advance in an IOLTA or other trust

account, to be drawn upon only as earned. At the time of the meeting, Ms. Baum informed you that she would communicate with you on behalf of Mr. Gomolka due to issues with Mr. Gomolka's employment.

A preliminary hearing was scheduled for June 23, 2020. You requested a continuance without consulting your client. The continuance was granted and the preliminary hearing was rescheduled for July 21, 2020, yet you failed to inform your client of the new date. On June 23, 2020, your client and Ms. Baum appeared for the preliminary hearing. They both had taken time off from work to attend. They were informed by the staff at the magistrate's office that a continuance had been granted at your request.

Ms. Baum contacted your office prior to July 21, 2020 and left messages for you, but you failed to reply, nor did you contact your client about his case. On July 21, 2020, you waived the criminal charges filed against your client to the Court of Common Pleas of Cambria County. After the July 21, 2020 preliminary hearing, Ms. Baum called you several times and left messages. Again, you never replied to her messages and did not contact your client about his case.

In October 2020, Mr. Gomolka consulted with David Beyer, Esquire about representation in the criminal matter. By letter dated October 28, 2020, Mr. Beyer enclosed a withdrawal of appearance on behalf of Mr. Gomolka and asked you to sign and return it. You failed to reply to Mr. Beyer's communication and you failed to withdraw from your representation of Mr. Gomolka, even though you were aware that he had requested that you do so.

Instead, from October 28, 2020 through December 16, 2020, you continued to act in Mr. Gomolka's criminal matter by attending a preliminary conference, completing

a treatment form for a drug and alcohol program, presenting an application for continuance, and agreeing to Mr. Gomolka's placement in the ARD program.

On November 10, 2020, Ms. Baum informed you that her son had hired Mr. Beyer as successor counsel and she requested a refund of the unused portion of the \$1,200 she had paid to you. You failed to reply to that communication. Ms. Baum continued to request a refund of at least half of the money, leaving voice mail messages and sending text messages and a letter. Eventually, you engaged in communication with Ms. Baum about her request for a refund and informed her it was your position that you did not owe her anything. By letter dated April 20, 2021, Mr. Gomolka requested an accounting of your time and a refund of the unused portion of the fee. You failed to reply to the letter.

Separately, on your 2020-2021 Attorney Registration form, you failed to list a business/operating account maintained or used by you in the practice of law, and listed your IOLTA account twice.

By your conduct, you violated the following Rules of Professional Conduct ("RPC") and Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement ("Pa.R.D.E."):

1. RPC 1.4(a)(3) and RPC 1.4(a)(4), in that you failed to adequately communicate with either your client or Ms. Baum about the status of your client's matter and to promptly comply with their reasonable requests for information.
2. RPC 1.5(b), in that you failed to communicate in writing to Mr. Gomolka the basis or rate of your fee in a timely manner.

3. RPC 1.15(b), in that you failed to hold separate from your own property Ms. Baum's advance payment of your fee, made on behalf of your client, until it was earned by you.
4. RPC 1.15(e), in that you failed to promptly deliver to Ms. Baum or your client any portion of the advance payment of fee with which you were entrusted.
5. RPC 1.15(i), in that you failed to deposit in a trust account legal fees paid to you in advance, to be withdrawn by you only as the fees were earned.
6. RPC 1.16(a), in that you failed to promptly withdraw your appearance on behalf of Mr. Gomolka when he directed you to do so through successor counsel.
7. RPC 1.16(d), in that you failed to refund to Ms. Baum any portion of the advance payment of fee with which you were entrusted and failed to cooperate with successor counsel who contacted you on Mr. Gomolka's behalf.
8. Pa.R.D.E. 219(d)(1)(iii), in that you failed to set forth on your 2020-2021 Attorney Annual Registration form the name of each financial institution in which you held funds of Ms. Baum that were subject to RPC 1.15.

Mr. Bills, your conduct in this matter is public. This Public Reprimand is a matter of public record and shall be posted on the Disciplinary Board's website at www.padisciplinaryboard.org.

It is the Board's duty to reprimand you for your misconduct. We note that you

have a history of discipline. On April 10, 2018, you received an informal admonition with attached condition that you refund monies to three clients. On July 15, 2021, you received a public reprimand with the attached condition that you refund monies to one client. We note that the misconduct in the instant matter is similar to the misconduct in the two prior disciplinary matters, and occurred at approximately the same time as the misconduct that resulted in the 2021 public reprimand. Please be aware that any subsequent violations on your part can only result in further discipline and more severe sanctions, due to your history of discipline. We sincerely hope that you will conduct yourself in such a manner that future disciplinary action will be unnecessary.

S/Shohin H. Vance

Designated Member
The Disciplinary Board of the
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Administered by a designated panel of three Members of The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania on December 9, 2022.