

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL, : No. 3159 Disciplinary Docket No. 3
:
Petitioner : No. 54 DB 2024
:
v. : Attorney Registration No. 74118
:
OLIVIA A. ADAMS, : (Montgomery County)
:
Respondent :

ORDER

PER CURIAM

AND NOW, this this 17th day of April, 2026, upon consideration of the Report and Recommendations of the Disciplinary Board, the Petition for Review, and Answer, Olivia A. Adams is suspended from the practice of law in this Commonwealth for a period of five years. Respondent’s Application for Relief and Request for Oral Argument is denied.

Respondent shall comply with the provisions of Pa.R.D.E. 217 and pay costs to the Disciplinary Board. See Pa.R.D.E. 208(g).

A True Copy Nicole Traini
As Of 04/17/2026

Attest: 
Chief Clerk
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL,	:	No. 54 DB 2024
Petitioner	:	
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v.	:	Attorney Registration No. 74118
	:	
OLIVIA A. ADAMS,	:	
Respondent	:	(Montgomery County)

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF
THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

TO THE HONORABLE CHIEF JUSTICE AND JUSTICES
OF THE SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA:

Pursuant to Rule 208(d)(2)(iii) of the Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement, the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania (“Board”) herewith submits its findings and recommendations to your Honorable Court with respect to the above-captioned Petition for Discipline.

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

The Board makes the following factual findings:

1. Petitioner, Office of Disciplinary Counsel (“ODC”), whose principal office is located at Pennsylvania Judicial Center, Suite 2700, 601 Commonwealth Ave., P.O. Box 62485, Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, is invested, pursuant to Pa.R.D.E. 207, with the power and duty to investigate all matters involving alleged misconduct of an attorney admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and to prosecute all disciplinary proceedings brought in accordance with the provisions of said Rules.

2. Respondent, Olivia A. Adams, was born in 1969 and was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth in 1995. Adams is subject to the jurisdiction of the Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.

3. Adams is currently on active status for the practice of law and has no history of discipline.

Walsh Case Background

4. Pennsylvania's Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act, often referred to as "Act 135," enables individuals, non-profit corporations, or government entities who qualify under the Act to petition a court for appointment of a conservator to take possession of an abandoned or vacant property in order to remediate blighted and dangerous conditions that exist. N.T. I at 26-27.

5. In an Act 135 action, the court presides over the entire conservatorship process, including holding hearings to appoint the conservator and approve the preliminary plan for blight remediation, approving the final plan, supervising repairs and remediation, authorizing the sale of the property, and distributing proceeds accordingly. N.T. I at 29, 31-33.

6. On June 3, 2016, pursuant to Act 135, Charles J. Walsh, III, Laura Blau, and Philadelphia Community Development Coalition ("Petitioners") filed a petition in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas ("*Walsh*"), requesting the appointment of a conservator to take possession of an abandoned, blighted property located at 325 South 18th Street in Philadelphia (the "Subject Property") and to remediate the blighted conditions and return the property to a safe and productive use. ODC-23 at 0003188-319; ODC-24 at 000367; R-13.

7. Petitioners were represented by Paul J. Toner, Esquire, and Michael P.

McIlhinney, Esquire, with the law firm of Orphanides & Toner, LLP (“OTLLP”). ODC-23 at 000319; ODC-24 at 000368; R-13.

8. When *Walsh* commenced, Teresa Isabella was the owner of the Subject Property. ODC-23 at 000319; ODC-24 at 000369.

9. Subsequently, on or about April 28, 2017, Isabella sold the Subject Property to a developer, Anthony Rufo, and his limited liability corporation, 325 S. 18th Street, LLC (“Subject Property LLC”). ODC-23 at 000319; ODC-24 at 000369; N.T. I at 36.

10. Shortly thereafter, Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge Nina Wright Padilla granted the Subject Property LLC’s petition to intervene in the *Walsh* case. ODC-23 at 000319; ODC-24 at 000371; R-13.

11. On May 17, 2017, following a hearing conducted on May 2, 2017, Judge Padilla issued an Order granting the petition and appointing Petitioner Philadelphia Community Development Coalition to serve as the conservator for the Subject Property. N.T. I at 39-41; R-13.

12. On June 21, 2017, Adams entered her appearance as counsel for the intervenor Subject Property LLC. ODC-1; R-13.

13. On April 5, 2018, Supervising Judge Idee C. Fox assigned Judge Kenneth J. Powell to preside over *Walsh*. ODC-2; R-13.

14. Following her entry of appearance in *Walsh* and during the course of the litigation, Adams filed motions for reconsideration of rulings, appeals of rulings to various appellate courts, and complaints against judges with the Judicial Conduct Board. None were successful. N.T. I at 46-55, 250; N.T. II at 338-339, 345-350; R-13.

Walsh: Adams’ 2018 Correspondence Regarding Judge Powell

15. On August 19, 2018, Adams wrote a five-page letter to Judge Powell, copying President Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper, Mr. Toner, and others, to “address [his] handling” of the *Walsh* case “since the issuance” of Judge Fox’s April 2018 Order. ODC-3. In the letter, among other accusations, Adams accused Judge Powell of: (i) “failing to read and properly consider the submissions in this case”; (ii) “not [being] prepared to adjudicate in this matter”; (iii) being “a disgrace and yet another embarrassment for this profession that I so once loved and now despise because of judges who don’t read or respect their work or the work of anyone else”; (iv) exhibiting “indifference and neglect”; (v) “orchestrat[ing] (negligently or intentionally) proceedings that deprive my client’s rights to property, a fair hearing, due process of law and respect”; (vi) being “prejudiced, biased or ignorant of the facts and law”; (vii) “fix[ing]” the case; and (viii) “caus[ing] more damage with a pen than a prohibition gangster with a ‘Tommy Gun!’” *Id.*

16. On August 19, 2018, Adams wrote a two-page letter to President Judge Woods-Skipper, copying Judge Powell, Mr. Toner, and others, “regarding [Judge Powell’s] conduct” in the *Walsh* case. ODC-4. In addition to enclosing the five-page letter she had sent directly to Judge Powell, Adams stated to Judge Woods-Skipper, in reference to Judge Powell, that “I had hoped that I would get a judge who would read the submission of the parties and either find in my client’s favor or, at least provide a legally sound reason for not doing so.” *Id.*

17. In a subsequent filing in *Walsh*, Adams attached an October 8, 2018 email to Bruce Castor, Esquire (who was representing Ms. Isabella at the time) in which, among other accusations, she accused Judge Powell of having opposing counsel (Mr. Toner and OTLLP) “write the opinions” he had recently issued in the case. ODC-23 at 000324; ODC-24 at 000380; R-13; ODC-5.

18. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Powell credibly testified that the accusations against him in Adams' 2018 correspondence were false. N.T. II at 13-27. Judge Powell also testified that the correspondence served no legitimate purpose in the litigation, as the August 2018 letters were not motions or any other appropriate filing or correspondence with the court. ("I have never seen anything like this in all my years, even as a probation officer when I was dealing only with criminals, accusing me of anything like this or with this tenor, and it was just wrong."). *Id.* at 20-21

Walsh: Adams' March 2021 Email Regarding Judge Powell

19. On March 23, 2021, hours after Judge Powell issued a final order in the *Walsh* conservatorship, Adams emailed Mr. Toner, copying Judge Powell and others, subject line "Purported Order of March 23, 2021." ODC-6; R-13. In her email, among other accusations, Adams accused Judge Powell of: (i) "bias, denial of equal protection, substantive and procedural due process violations . . . so extreme and outrageous that even a blind person can clearly see the injustice of these entire proceedings"; (ii) "incompetence and insanity that has greatly contributed to the unconscionable miscarriage of justice perpetrated by the bar in this Commonwealth"; (iii) "lack of motivation to do justice"; (iv) "utter lack of judicial acumen"; and (v) being "a disgrace to the bench[.]" ODC-6.

20. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Powell credibly testified that the accusations against him in Adams' March 2021 email were false. N.T. II at 29-31. Judge Powell also testified that the email served no legitimate purpose in the litigation. ("It's another improper communication in which I believe she's trying to influence this Court in its decision-making. This is a threat, not explicit, but it's a threat."). *Id.* at 31.

Rufo: Adams' June 2021 Federal Lawsuit
Against Judge Powell and Judge Fox

21. On June 28, 2021, dissatisfied with Judge Powell's decisions in *Walsh*, and just a few months after falsely accusing him of misconduct and incompetence, Adams filed a 63-page complaint in the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Pennsylvania ("*Rufo*"), against Judge Powell, Judge Fox, Mr. Toner, and others, alleging a litany of state and federal law violations arising from Act 135 cases, including *Walsh*. ODC-8.

22. In the *Rufo* complaint, Adams accused Judge Powell and Judge Fox of: (i) "abdicat[ing] judicial ethics to support the success" of opposing counsel and the conservator in *Walsh* and their "Act 135 Petition Mill"; (ii) "regularly collud[ing] with purported 'court-appointed conservators' and their counsel to rob the most vulnerable people in Pennsylvania"; (iii) "intentionally aid[ing] and abet[ing]" opposing counsel and the conservator in *Walsh* "in systematically usurping equity and stealing real estate belonging to Plaintiffs and other private citizens of the United States"; (iv) "protect[ing], preserv[ing], and perpetuat[ing] [a] theft ring"; (v) "concerted efforts to commit multi-faceted fraud and theft by extortion"; (vi) "unholy alliances designed . . . to illegally 'fix' the outcome of Act 135 litigation, in favor of" opposing counsel and the conservator in *Walsh*; (vii) "aid[ing] and abet[ing]" an "extortion ring"; (viii) "work[ing] in concert to usurp equity or steal property without just compensation"; and (ix) "exort[ing] Plaintiffs out of hundreds of thousands of dollars[.]" ODC-8 at 000070, 72, 76, 77, 78, 80, 92, 93.

23. In an attempt to support the allegations set forth in the *Rufo* complaint, Adams attached and publicly filed "Section II" of her "Act 135 Packet," a 43-page "Summary" she created, which includes photographs and more than 50 footnotes, that

repeats and expands upon the many accusations of criminal conduct she made against Judge Powell and Judge Fox in the complaint itself. ODC-7; ODC-8. In this Packet, Adams further asserted accusations against the entire First Judicial District, and both the Commonwealth and Supreme Courts of Pennsylvania alleging, *inter alia*, incompetency, criminal conspiracy, collusion, and corruption in their handling and involvement in the Act 135 case as well as their handling and involvement in other unrelated conservatorship cases filed under Act 135. N.T. I at 72-75; N.T. II at 39-40, 293-294; ODC-7.

24. On November 18, 2021, upon consideration of their motion, United States District Court Judge Gerald J. Pappert dismissed with prejudice all claims against Judge Powell and Judge Fox. ODC-9 (Order); ODC-10 (Memorandum Opinion). While Judge Pappert was required to “accept[] as true” all “well-pleaded factual allegations,” he concluded that the *Rufo* complaint, including the Act 135 Packet, both prepared and filed by Adams, had not “state[d] a claim that is plausible on its face.” ODC-10 at 000135, 136, 147 (citations omitted). Among other reasons, Judge Pappert found that: “[a]lthough the Complaint is replete with accusations of dishonest behavior . . . it nowhere intelligibly identifies the who, what, when, where or how of any claimed fraud”; the allegations against Judge Powell and Judge Fox were “all conclusory allegations which merit no weight”; and the “allegations of extra-judicial conduct lack the factual support required[.]” ODC-10 at 000142, 145.

25. Subsequently, the United States Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit affirmed Judge Pappert’s order dismissing with prejudice all claims against Judge Powell and Judge Fox. ODC-11.

26. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Powell credibly testified that the accusations against him in the *Rufo* complaint and accompanying Act 135 Packet were

false. N.T. II at 33-53; *see also id.* at 43 (“It’s just so insulting, so wrong, so erroneous that it causes me inner pain to hear this again. . . . Never, ever, ever have I seen words like this written down and sent to me and shared with other people in [a] complaint, my superiors, et cetera.”).

27. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Fox credibly testified that the accusations against her in the *Rufo* complaint and accompanying Act 135 Packet were false. N.T. II at 136-152, 164.

Walsh: Adams’ October 2021 Emails Regarding Judge Powell

28. On October 6, 2021, despite Judge Powell’s instruction not to communicate with the court through email, Adams emailed Judge Powell’s secretary and law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others regarding her motion to disqualify Judge Powell. ODC-12; N.T. II at 32-33. In her email, among other accusations, Adams accused Judge Powell of: (i) being “extremely dishonest”; (ii) performing “dishonest acts”; (iii) being “dirty”; (iv) committing “unethical and illegal acts”; (v) getting “in the dirt with criminals”; (vi) taking “on the role of a crime boss”; (vii) being an “unjust, corrupt, crooked and outright criminal judge!” ODC-12.

29. On October 8, 2021, after Judge Powell had decided to hold Adams in contempt of court, Adams emailed Judge Powell’s secretary and law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others, subject line “Removal Invitiates Judgement of Contempt and the Entire Hearing.” ODC-13; N.T. II at 68-69. In her email, among other accusations, Adams accused Judge Powell of being “dishonest” since “the inception of his involvement with this case[.]” ODC-13.

30. Also on October 8, 2021, Adams emailed Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others, subject line “Order of Contempt and Hearing.” ODC-14. In her email,

Adams stated that “Judge Powell has no jurisdiction over me or this case” and claimed that the “entire case is a documented fraudulent exercise, and he was called in to deal with me.” *Id.* Adams instructed Judge Powell’s law clerk to advise Judge Powell that, “in anticipation of the purported Order of Contempt,” her “civil rights attorney and members of civil rights organizations . . . will either be on Zoom or leading the civil rights march to expose the injustices in this Court and this case.” *Id.*

31. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Powell credibly testified that the accusations against him in Adams’ October 2021 emails were false. N.T. II at 58-69. Judge Powell also testified that the emails served no legitimate purpose in the litigation. *Id.* at 62-63, 69. Nevertheless, Judge Powell explained that, given Adams’ claim that “she was going to have a group of people, it was somewhere between 110 and 1,100, picketing at City Hall [Judge Powell] decided it wasn’t worth it, just forget about it, she’ll go on as she always has anyway,” and he vacated his contempt order. *Id.* at 69.

Walsh: Adams’ January 21, 2022 Email Regarding Judge Powell

32. On January 21, 2022, Adams emailed Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others, subject line “Business Records.” ODC-15. In her email, Adams instructed Judge Powell’s law clerk to “convey[]” her “message” to Judge Powell, including letting him know that she was “not making threats” because “[s]omeone is going to jail,” and that the “inequities and prejudice that [Judge Powell] has flagrantly employed have irreparably damaged the credibility of this court and the integrity of these entire proceedings.” ODC-15.

33. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Powell testified that Adams’ January 21, 2022 email served no legitimate purpose in the litigation, and that he read Adams’ threat of “jail” as referring to him. N.T. II at 70-71.

Walsh: Adams' July 2022 Filing and Emails Regarding Judge Powell

34. On April 26, 2022, Judge Powell held a virtual hearing on fees and costs in *Walsh*, which, as a result of Adams' mid-hearing technical issues, he continued to July 2022. R-13; N.T. I at 118-120.

35. On July 14 and 25, 2022, Judge Powell resumed the fees and costs hearing in-person, which Adams did not attend. R-13; R-25; R-26. Instead, on July 13, 2022, the day before the hearing began, Kenneth D. Perkins, Esquire entered his appearance on behalf of Adams' client Subject Property LLC and attended both days of the hearing. R-13; R-25; R-26. Perkins' involvement in *Walsh* was limited to the hearings on July 14 and 25, 2022. N.T. II at 228.

36. On July 25, 2022, the final day of the fees and costs hearing, Adams filed a motion to disqualify Judge Powell for abuse of power and diminished mental and physical capacity. ODC-16; R-13. Adams' motion was dated July 24, 2022 and, consequently, did not include any testimony or other information from the final day (July 25, 2022) of the hearing. In her motion, among many other accusations, Adams accused Judge Powell of: (i) "abuse of power, diminished mental, physical, and behavioral capacity"; (ii) repeated "conduct unbecoming a judge"; (iii) "conced[ing]" that his "deteriorating health interrupted this case for several months"; (iv) "announc[ing] that he has diminished mental capacity"; (v) having "delirium"; (vi) "overall lack of judicial acumen"; (vii) having "a history of mental instability throughout this proceeding"; (viii) being "full of sickness" and "rancor"; and (ix) being "not mentally or emotionally capable of objectively apply[ing] the law." ODC-16.

37. The same day, July 25, 2022, Adams emailed Judge Powell's law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others, subject line "Motion to Disqualify for Severe Mental, Physical and Emotional Diminished Capacity and Extreme Abuse of Power," and attached her motion

to disqualify Judge Powell. In her email, and even though she had not attended the hearing and Mr. Perkins was representing Subject Property LLC, Adams also accused Judge Powell of displaying “severe disorientation and uncontrolled rage” at the July 14, 2022 hearing, and of being “not well” and claiming, “he should have never been allowed to preside over this case.” ODC-17.

38. Shortly thereafter, also on July 25, 2022, Adams emailed Judge Fox, copying Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others, subject line “Motion to Disqualify Based on Severe and Admitted Diminished Mental and Physical Capacity,” and attached her motion to disqualify Judge Powell. In her email, Adams accused Judge Powell of being “filled with unbridled rage,” “behaving as a mad man,” and “contemptuous and delirious conduct.” ODC-18.

39. The next day, July 26, 2022, Adams forwarded to Judge Powell’s law clerk a July 26, 2022 email she had sent to Judge Fox and others in which she accused Judge Powell of being “unqualified,” “unstable,” and “mentally unsound” and stated that Judge Fox knew Judge Powell was “unqualified.” In her email to Judge Powell’s law clerk, Adams noted that “Judge Powell should know what is being said and done regarding him[.]” ODC-19.

40. On September 9, 2022, Judge Fox denied Adams’ Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell. R-13.

41. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Powell credibly testified that the accusations against him in the July 2022 Motion to Disqualify and emails were false. N.T. II at 71-92. Judge Powell also testified that the correspondence served no legitimate purpose in the litigation. *Id.* at 87.

42. At the disciplinary hearing, Judge Fox credibly testified that the accusations

against Judge Powell in the July 2022 Motion to Disqualify and emails were false. N.T. II at 155-160. Judge Fox also testified that the correspondence served no legitimate purpose in the litigation. *Id.* at 160-164.

The Disciplinary Proceeding at No. 54 DB 2024

43. Throughout the disciplinary proceedings, Adams continued to level allegations against the qualifications and integrity of Judge Powell and Judge Fox and repeatedly claimed that such accusations are true.

44. On March 1, 2023, ODC issued a DB-7 Request for Statement of Respondent's Position advising Adams that ODC was considering two complaints against her: one opened on motion by ODC and a second complaint filed by Judge Fox. ODC-21.

45. By letter dated May 1, 2023, Adams provided a response to the DB-7. ODC-22.

46. In her DB-7 response, Adams wrote, *inter alia*,

a. "However, the record reflects that it is the behavior or the Complainants that warrants *strong* censure and *swift* sanctions— **not that of the Respondent**";

b. "To the extent that Respondent's behavior has contributed, it is limited to exposure. Be very sure, it is the Complainants' conduct—individually and collectively—that functioned as the **superseding intervening 'but for cause'**";

c. Hence, this [referring to the present disciplinary proceedings] is merely an alternative and concerted effort to have Respondent ejected from *Walsh* and ultimately the legal profession. Desperate Complainants **plan to**

prevent the exposure of extreme unethical and illegal conduct thoroughly documented in *Walsh* [and] other Act 135 litigation”;

- d. Realize, **for four (4) entire years**, Respondent has filed such extreme, copious, and outrageous content—all true—that twelve (12) alarm fires should have consumed the highest court in this jurisdiction. Horrific. **Respondent has merely communicated what is painfully true and undeniably evident.**” (emphasis in original)

ODC-22 at cover letter and introductory pages 1-2.

47. In an email to ODC dated July 1, 2023, in which Adams requested a copy of Judge Fox’s complaint, Adams wrote, *inter alia*, “I want to hear what Judge Fox had the audacity to write me [referring to Judge Fox’s complaint] while she protects Judge Powell. His actions are disgraceful and yes, dirty—the dirtiest I have ever seen.” ODC-20.

48. On May 28, 2024, ODC filed a Petition for Discipline against Adams, charging her with violations of Rules of Professional Conduct 3.1, 3.3(a)(1), 3.5(a), 3.5(d), 8.2(a), 8.4(c), and 8.4(d). ODC-23.

49. Adams filed an Answer in Opposition to Petition for Discipline on July 8, 2024. ODC-24.

50. In her verified Answer, Adams accused Judge Powell of “unethical and perhaps criminal conduct”; “an egregious level of incompetence and unbridled animus”; “contribut[ing] to the [First Judicial District] and Pennsylvania Courts earning the notoriety of being named ‘America’s Number #1 Judicial Hellhole’ for many consecutive years”; having “never complied with basic Rules of Civility”; and displaying “unbridled rage and animus” towards her. ODC-24 at pp. 1-2, ¶ 10, p. 13, ¶ 11, p. 15, ¶ 50, p. 31, ¶ 57, p. 33.

51. A District II Hearing Committee (the “Committee”) was appointed and a prehearing conference was held on September 24, 2024.

52. Prior to the disciplinary hearing: (i) ODC filed objections to the proffered testimony of Adams’ witnesses; (ii) Adams filed a motion to disqualify disciplinary counsel for allegedly not producing timely Judge Fox’s disciplinary complaint against her; (iii) Adams filed a motion to supplement her exhibit list with 31 additional exhibits, including Judge Fox’s disciplinary complaint; and (iv) Adams moved to stay the proceedings primarily because the Committee had not yet issued a decision on ODC’s objections to Adams’ proposed witnesses.

53. On October 22 and 25, 2024, the Committee Chair issued orders: (i) overruling ODC’s objections to the proffered testimony of Adams’ witnesses; (ii) denying Adams’ motion to disqualify disciplinary counsel; (iii) granting Adams’ request to supplement her exhibit list with Judge Fox’s disciplinary complaint and (iv) denying as untimely Adams’ request to stay the proceedings.

54. The Committee held a disciplinary hearing on November 13 and 14, 2024.

55. ODC presented testimony from Mr. Toner, Judge Powell, and Judge Fox, and introduced exhibits ODC-1 through ODC-24, which were admitted into evidence.

56. Mr. Toner was admitted to the bar in Pennsylvania in 2006 and is a partner in the law firm of Orphanides & Toner, LLP. N.T. I at 25-26.

57. Mr. Toner denied the truth of any and all of Adams’ statements attacking the qualifications and integrity of Judge Powell and Judge Fox. N.T. I at 61-62, 68-69, 75-76, 83-84, 103, 105, 107, 111-115, 123-124, 128-129, 132, 136.

58. Mr. Toner credibly testified that Adams failed to provide any evidence to him to prove the truth of any of the statements she made attacking the qualifications and

integrity of Judge Powell and Judge Fox, nor was he aware of the existence of any evidence. N.T. I at 75-76, 83-84, 94-95, 103, 105, 136.

59. Mr. Toner denied participating with Judge Powell, Judge Fox or any other judges or persons or entities in a “RICO scam,” “criminal conspiracy,” or “theft ring” designed to “rob” people or “steal their houses.” N.T. I at 84, 94-95, 136.

60. Judge Powell was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1980 and for the last 16 years has served as a Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas Judge. He currently sits as a senior judge in the Civil Division. N.T. II at 6-12.

61. Judge Powell denied the truth of any and all of Adams’ statements in the federal filing, Motion to Disqualify, emails, and letters impugning his qualifications and integrity and emphatically testified that all of Adams’ statements to that effect were false. N.T. II at 17-18, 27-29, 31-32, 41-43, 52-53, 62, 67, 82-85, 88, 90.

62. Specifically, Judge Powell testified that Adams’ statements accusing him of being “corrupt”; “crooked”; “criminal”; “dirty”; “fixing” and “rigging the outcome of her case”; and knowingly taking part in a “RICO scam,” “criminal conspiracy,” and “theft ring” designed to “rob” people and “steal their houses” were all false. N.T. II at 17-18, 41-43, 52-53, 62.

63. Judge Powell testified that he was not aware of any evidence or facts that proved the truth of any of Adams’ accusations maligning the qualifications and integrity of himself, Judge Fox, or any other member of the judiciary in Pennsylvania. N.T. II at 15, 41, 56-57.

64. Judge Fox was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1977. For the last 28 years, Judge Fox served in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas as a trial judge and

Supervising and President Judge. Judge Fox currently sits as a senior judge in the Civil Division. N.T. II at 132-135.

65. Judge Fox denied the truth or veracity of any and all of Adams' statements impugning her qualifications and integrity, and stated that all of Adams' statements to that effect were false. N.T. II at 144-145, 152-158, 160.

66. Specifically, Judge Fox testified that Adams' statements accusing her of being "corrupt," "crooked," "criminal," "dirty," "fixing" and "rigging the outcome of her case," and knowingly taking part in a "RICO scam," "criminal conspiracy," and "theft ring" designed to "rob" people and "steal their houses" were all false. N.T. II at 164.

67. Judge Fox testified that she was not aware of any evidence or facts that proved the truth of any of Adams' accusations maligning the qualifications and integrity of herself, Judge Powell or any member of the judiciary in Pennsylvania. N.T. II at 145.

68. Adams appeared pro se. She presented her own testimony and the testimony of Kenneth D. Perkins, Esquire. Mr. Perkins' testimony was limited to his observations during the hearings in the *Walsh* Act 135 case before Judge Powell on July 14 and 25, 2022.

69. Adams introduced exhibits R-13 through R-26 and R-36, which were admitted into evidence. These exhibits comprise a *Walsh* docket report and *Walsh* hearing transcripts and a disciplinary complaint filed by Judge Fox against Adams. Adams also introduced exhibit R-11 (an undated, self-authored, self-titled, five-part "Act 135 RICO Packet" comprised of more than 3,000 pages of documents assembled by Adams) over objection by ODC. Following argument by the parties, the Committee admitted only

the portions of R-11 that Adams used during the disciplinary hearing. N.T. II at 321, 322, 352, 353, 354.¹

70. Mr. Perkins was admitted to the Pennsylvania Bar in 1981. He entered his appearance in the Act 135 case as Adams' co-counsel and appeared at the July 14 and July 25, 2022 hearings before Judge Powell related to fees and costs. N.T. II at 232, 259-260. Mr. Perkins had no other involvement in the Act 135 case. N.T. II at 226, 228, 259-260. Adams called Mr. Perkins as a witness in her disciplinary hearing to describe his personal observations of Judge Powell. N.T. II at 212-224.

71. Mr. Perkins described Judge Powell's conduct, behavior and demeanor during the July 14, 2022 hearing as "combative," "disrespectful," "inappropriate," "disoriented," and "confused." N.T. II at 231-232, 237.

72. Mr. Perkins testified that he "felt that [Judge Powell's] demeanor changed and was significantly better on July the 25th." N.T. II at 251.

73. Adams testified on her own behalf.

74. Adams stood by the written statements in her emails, letters, and court filings that were admitted as evidence. ("I stick by everything that's in my writing.") N.T. II at 333; ("I admit the statements that I made.") *Id.* at 335; ("Because whatever is [in the documents], let me say this, whatever is there I signed my name, and whatever you see I have thought long and hard. I don't just shoot off. . . . So, whatever I've written, whenever you see my John Hancock it's unmistakable. . . . And I stand behind it. . . . It's true. It's based on what I have. Yes, it is true."). *Id.* at 336.

¹ The Committee later denied Adams' post-hearing request to submit the entire Exhibit R-11.

75. During her testimony, Adams continued to make accusations against Judge Powell. (“I do believe [Judge Powell] is dirty.”) N.T. II at 332. (“[Judge Powell] is the dirtiest I’ve ever seen. Yes, he is.”). *Id.* at 333. Adams admitted that what she said about Judge Powell was “harsh” and “shocking.” *Id.* at 332, 333.

76. Adams testified that the transcripts of court hearings and court rulings in *Walsh* show “malfeasance” and a “foolproof scheme” of RICO that support her allegations. N.T. II at 289-299. She testified that “when you look at the [Act 135] cases together, you’re going to see malfeasance like you’ve never seen.” *Id.* at 315.

77. In her testimony, Adams claimed she met with the FBI as a result of her self-created RICO Packet. N.T. II at 279. Adams later testified, “I know it’s hearsay, but the FBI said, ‘How do you know that this is being done on purpose’? I didn’t know.” N.T. II at 330.

78. Adams failed to present evidence to prove her accusations were true or that she had an objective reasonable belief that the allegations were true based upon a reasonably diligent inquiry. *See Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Price*, 732 A.2d 599, 604 (Pa. 1999).

79. Adams failed to acknowledge any wrongdoing or accept responsibility for her actions. N.T. II at 335-338. Adams’ only concession was that as to her federal complaint filed against the judges and others, “I’m not a federal litigator. I should have done a better job.”² N.T. II at 313.

80. On December 13, 2024, Adams formally requested permission to “file and utilize” as additional evidence another fifteen categories of documents, including the

² At oral argument, Adams reflected on whether she would have done anything differently and again stated only that she “probably would have amended the [federal] complaint instead of letting it just go.” Oral Argument 7/17/25 N.T. at 45.

entirety of exhibit R-11, which ODC opposed. On December 18, 2024, the Committee Chair issued an order denying Adams' request, noting that, among other things, Adams had not used these documents at any point during the disciplinary hearing.

81. ODC filed a post-hearing brief to the Committee on December 17, 2024. ODC recommended that Adams be subject to discipline of either a five year period of suspension or disbarment.

82. Adams filed a post-hearing brief to the Committee on January 6, 2025. On January 10, 2025, Adams filed a "corrected" version of her brief, which was accepted for filing. Adams' brief contained the same baseless allegations of misconduct that she had repeatedly made against Judge Powell and Judge Fox. See Adams' Brief, pp. 42-44 (claiming Judge Powell was full of "unbridled rage" and was a "judicial tyrant, an unhinged madman, hurling insults"); p. 54 ("Judge Powell is a dishonest judge"); p. 61 ("In the First Judicial District there is a well-organized and ongoing equity and property theft scheme – racking up millions of dollars in stolen property and equity"); p. 62 ("Judge Fox has issued many decrees illegally").

83. Adams contended that her actions were "driven by a steadfast commitment to preserving the integrity of the legal profession" and were "necessitated by clear and imminent threats posed by unjust and patently unlawful rulings." Adams' Brief, p. 67 ¶212. Adams further stated that "[t]he Rules of Professional Conduct always have—as **they must have**—consideration for substantial deviation, even hard violations, in the cause of justice." *Id.*, p. 69 ¶217 (emphasis in original). Adams argues that her actions were justified and "intended to rectify grave injustices perpetuated by judicial and legal misconduct under the auspices of Act 135." *Id.*, pp. 72-73. Adams did not make a recommendation for discipline.

84. By Report filed on March 6, 2025, the Committee found that ODC proved that Adams' accusations of criminal and other improper conduct against Judge Powell and Judge Fox were false. The Committee further found that Adams, "despite filing thousands of pages, cross examining both judges, and calling her own witness, was unable to produce any evidence whatsoever to support her claim" that her accusations against the judges were true. HC Rpt., p. 1. The Committee concluded Adams violated Rules of Professional Conduct 3.3(a)(1), 3.5(a), 3.5(d), 8.2(a), 8.4(c), and 8.4(d). The Committee found in aggravation that Adams failed to express remorse or acknowledge any misconduct and noted "the sheer volume and viciousness of the false attacks." *Id.* at 27. The Committee found in mitigation that Adams has no history of discipline in a long legal career. The Committee recommended that Adams be suspended for a period of no less than five years.

85. On March 26, 2025, Adams filed a Brief on Exceptions to the Committee's Report and requested oral argument before the Board. Adams contended that: (i) ODC's witnesses were impeached and discredited by the record and the witnesses made materially false statements under oath at the disciplinary hearing; (ii) the Committee improperly excluded Exhibit R-11 (the full, five-part Act 135 RICO packet)³; (iii) the Committee disregarded evidence in the record; (iv) Adams was not accused of dishonesty, harm, or financial misconduct; (v) the five year suspension is unsupported by the evidence and the law. Adams repeated her accusations attacking the qualifications and integrity of Judge Powell and Judge Fox.⁴ Adams asked the Board to order a de novo hearing, reject the Committee's Report, and decline to impose any discipline.

³ Adams at times incorrectly referred to the exhibit as R-13. See Adams' Brief on Exceptions, pp. 73, 79.

⁴ Adams also accused Disciplinary Counsel of prosecutorial misconduct. See Adams' Brief on Exceptions, p. 9.

86. On April 7, 2025, ODC filed a Brief Opposing Respondent's Brief on Exceptions. ODC contended that Adams' exceptions have no merit and the Committee's recommendation for a five year suspension is supported by the record.

87. A three-member panel of the Board held oral argument on July 17, 2025.

88. The Board adjudicated this matter at the meeting on July 22, 2025.

II. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

By her conduct as set forth above, Adams violated the following Rules of Professional Conduct:

1. RPC 3.3(a)(1) - A lawyer shall not knowingly make a false statement of material fact or law to a tribunal or fail to correct a false statement of material fact or law previously made to the tribunal by the lawyer.
2. RPC 3.5(a) - A lawyer shall not seek to influence a judge, juror, prospective juror or other official by means prohibited by law.
3. RPC 3.5(d) - A lawyer shall not engage in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal.
4. RPC 8.2(a) - A lawyer shall not make a statement that the lawyer knows to be false or with reckless disregard as to its truth or falsity concerning the qualifications or integrity of a judge, adjudicatory officer or public legal officer, or of a candidate for election or appointment to judicial or legal office.
5. RPC 8.4(c) - It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation, except

that a lawyer may advise, direct or supervise others, including clients, law enforcement officers, and investigators, who participate in lawyer investigative activities.

6. RPC 8.4(d) - It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to engage in conduct that is prejudicial to the administration of justice.

III. DISCUSSION

This matter is before the Board following oral argument on Adams' exceptions to the Committee's Report that unanimously recommended a five year suspension of her law license for violating numerous Rules of Professional Conduct related to false allegations against judges. For the reasons set forth below, we conclude that Adams engaged in professional misconduct that warrants a suspension for a period of five years.

Adams' Misconduct

The record evidence demonstrates that Adams was admitted to practice in the Commonwealth in 1995 and has no record of attorney discipline. In June of 2016, an action for conservatorship of a blighted property was commenced in the *Walsh* case by the filing of a petition in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, pursuant to Pennsylvania's Abandoned and Blighted Property Conservatorship Act, known as "Act 135." Paul Toner, Esquire with the law firm of Orphanides & Toner, LLP, represented the petitioners. Following a hearing in May of 2017, Judge Nina Wright Padilla granted the petition and appointed the Philadelphia Community Development Coalition to serve as conservator for the subject blighted property. In June of 2017, Adams entered her appearance in the *Walsh* case on behalf of Anthony Rufo and his limited liability

corporation, who had been granted intervenor status. In April of 2018, Supervising Judge Fox assigned Judge Powell to preside over *Walsh*.

During her representation in the *Walsh* Act 135 case, Adams came to believe that certain judges, attorneys, individuals, and courts were conspiring against her and her client in a wide-ranging scheme to steal property. From August of 2018 through July of 2022, before different tribunals and to numerous recipients, Adams brought forth her belief in multiple attacks on the qualifications and integrity of judges involved in the litigation, specifically Judge Powell and Judge Fox. These attacks were contained in a federal civil rights complaint, Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell, two letters, and nine emails as set forth below:

- August 19, 2018 letter to Judge Powell, copying President Judge Sheila Woods-Skipper, Mr. Toner, and others related to Judge Powell's handling of the *Walsh* case (Adams accused Judge Powell of "failing to read and properly consider the submissions in this case"; being "a disgrace and yet another embarrassment for this profession"; exhibiting "indifference and neglect"; "orchestrat[ing] (negligently or intentionally) proceedings that deprived [Adams'] client's rights to property, a fair hearing, due process of law and respect"; being "prejudiced, biased or ignorant of the facts and law"; "fix[ing]" the case; and "causing more damage with a pen than a prohibition gangster with a 'Tommy Gun!'") (ODC-3)

- August 19, 2018 letter to President Judge Woods-Skipper, copying Judge Powell, Mr. Toner, and others related to Judge Powell's "conduct" in the *Walsh* case (Adams reiterated that Judge Powell was not "fair," had not "read" the parties' submissions, and did not "rule according to the law") (ODC-4)

- October 8, 2018 email to Bruce Castor, Esquire (who was representing Ms. Isabella at the time), attached to a separate filing in *Walsh* that was provided to Judge Powell, Mr. Toner, and other parties in the case (Adams accused Judge Powell of having opposing counsel (Mr. Toner) and his law firm “write the opinions” he had recently issued in the case) (ODC-5)

- March 23, 2021 email to Mr. Toner, copying Judge Powell and others, related to a final order Judge Powell issued in *Walsh* (Adams accused Judge Powell of “bias, denial of equal protection, substantive and procedural due process violations ... so extreme and outrageous that even a blind person can clearly see the injustice of these entire proceedings”; “incompetence and insanity that has greatly contributed to the unconscionable miscarriage of justice perpetrated by the bar in this Commonwealth”; “lack of motivation to do justice”; “utter lack of judicial acumen”; and being “a disgrace to the bench”) (ODC-6)

- June 28, 2021 complaint filed in the Eastern District against Judge Powell, Judge Fox, Mr. Toner and others (Adams’ verified complaint in which she accused Judge Powell and Judge Fox of “abdicat[ing] judicial ethics to support the success” of opposing counsel and the conservator in *Walsh* and their “Act 135 Petition Mill”; “regularly collud[ing] with purported ‘court-appointed conservators’ and their counsel to rob the most vulnerable people in Pennsylvania”; “intentionally aid[ing] and abet[ting]” opposing counsel and the conservator in *Walsh* in “systematically usurping equity and stealing real estate”; “protect[ing], preserv[ing] and perpetuat[ing] a theft ring”; “concerted efforts to commit multi-faceted fraud and theft by extortion”; “unholy alliances designed ... to illegally ‘fix’ the outcome of Act 135 litigation in favor of” opposing counsel and the conservator in *Walsh*; “aid[ing] and abet[ting]” an “extortion ring”; “work[ing] in concert to

usurp equity or steal property without just compensation”; extort[ing] Plaintiffs out of hundreds of thousands of dollars.”) (ODC-8) (Adams attached and publicly filed “Section II” of her “Act 135 Packet,” which repeated and expanded on the accusations of criminal conduct she made against Judge Powell and Judge Fox, and accused the First Judicial District, and both the Commonwealth and Supreme Courts of Pennsylvania of, *inter alia*, incompetency, criminal conspiracy, collusion, and corruption in their handling and involvement in the Act 135 case as well as their handling and involvement in other unrelated conservatorship cases filed under Act 135.) (ODC-7)

- October 6, 2021 email to Judge Powell’s secretary and law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others regarding her Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell (Adams accused Judge Powell of being “extremely dishonest”; performing “dishonest acts”; being “dirty”; committing “unethical and illegal acts”; getting “in the dirt with criminals”; taking on “the role of a crime boss”; and being an “unjust, corrupt, crooked, and outright criminal judge”) (ODC-12)

- October 8, 2021 email to Judge Powell’s secretary, law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others sent after Judge Powell decided to hold Adams in contempt of court (Adams accused Judge Powell of being “dishonest” since “the inception of his involvement with the case”) (ODC-13)

- October 8, 2021 email to Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others regarding the contempt hearing (Adams claimed that the entire Act 135 case was a “documented fraudulent exercise” and instructed Judge Powell’s law clerk to advise Judge Powell that “in anticipation of the purported Order of Contempt,” her “civil rights attorney and members of civil rights organizations ... would be on Zoom or leading the civil rights march to expose injustices in this Court and this case.”) (ODC-14)

- January 21, 2022 email to Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others regarding “Business Records” (Adams instructed Judge Powell’s law clerk to convey her message to Judge Powell, including letting him know that she was “not making threats” because “someone is going to jail” and “the inequities and prejudice [Judge Powell] has flagrantly employed have irreparably damaged the credibility of this court and the integrity of these entire proceedings”) (ODC-15)

- July 25, 2022 Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell filed in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas (Adams’ verified motion in which she accused Judge Powell of “abuse of power, diminished mental, physical, and behavioral incapacity”; “conduct unbefitting a judge”; having “delirium”; “overall lack of judicial acumen”; having “a history of mental instability throughout this proceeding”; being “full of sickness” and “rancor”; and being “not mentally or emotionally capable of objectively apply[ing] the law”) (ODC-16)

- July 25, 2022 email to Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others (attaching Adams’ July 25, 2022 Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell) (Adams accused Judge Powell of displaying “severe disorientation and uncontrolled rage” at the July 14, 2022 hearing, and of being “not well.”) (ODC-17)

- July 25, 2022 email to Judge Fox, copying Judge Powell’s law clerk, Mr. Toner, and others (attaching Adams’ July 25, 2022 Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell) (Adams accused Judge Powell of being “filled with unbridled rage,” “behaving as a mad man” and “contemptuous and delirious conduct”) (ODC-18)

- July 26, 2022 email sent to Judge Fox and others (Adams accused Judge Powell of being “unqualified,” “unstable,” and “mentally unsound.” Adams forwarded this

email to Judge Powell's law clerk and noted that "Judge Powell should know what is being said and done regarding him.") (ODC-19)

Rules of Professional Conduct Violations

ODC charged Adams in a May 28, 2024 Petition for Discipline with knowingly making false statements of material fact or law to a tribunal or failing to correct a false statement of material fact or law previously made to the tribunal by the lawyer, in violation of RPC 3.3(a)(1); seeking to influence a judge or other official by means prohibited by law, in violation of RPC 3.5(a); engaging in conduct intended to disrupt a tribunal, in violation of RPC 3.5(d); making a statement that Adams knew to be false or with reckless disregard as to its truth or falsity concerning the qualifications or integrity of a judge, in violation of RPC 8.2(a); engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation, in violation of RPC 8.4(c); and conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, in violation of RPC 8.4(d).⁵ ODC bears the burden of proving professional misconduct by clear and convincing evidence. *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Anonymous Attorney*, 331 A.3d 523 (Pa. 2025). Upon our independent review,⁶ we find that ODC met its burden of proof as to these rules.

The principal charges of misconduct against Adams center on the allegations Adams made against Judge Powell and Judge Fox. We first examine Adams' assertions made in verified court filings (June 28, 2021 federal complaint and July 25, 2022 Motion to Disqualify Judge Powell) in the context of RPC 3.3(a)(1) and 8.2(a). To

⁵ ODC charged Adams with violation of RPC 3.1, which in pertinent part prohibits a lawyer from bringing or defending a proceeding, or asserting or controverting an issue therein, unless there is a basis in law and fact for doing so that is not frivolous, which includes a good faith argument for an extension, modification or reversal of existing law. The Committee did not conclude that Adams violated this rule. ODC did not take exception to the Committee's conclusions of law.

⁶ Pursuant to Pa.R.D.E. 208(d)(2), the Board may change the Committee's recommendation.

establish that Adams' allegations in the court filings are false, ODC can meet its burden of proof by presenting testimony from the jurists at whom the allegations were leveled that the statements are false. *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Price*, 732 A.2d 599, 604 (Pa. 1999).

ODC presented the testimony of Judge Powell and Judge Fox and examined the judges as to each of Adams' allegations against them. Judge Powell and Judge Fox credibly testified that every allegation against them is false. Judge Powell and Judge Fox credibly, strenuously, and unequivocally denied involvement in a criminal conspiracy with each other, any other judge, opposing counsel, or any other person to deprive litigants of property under Act 135. Judge Powell credibly denied Adams' allegations that he suffers from mental instability. ODC presented the testimony of Mr. Toner, who credibly denied participating with Judge Powell, Judge Fox, or other judges, persons, or entities in criminal conduct or other improper conduct related to Act 135 cases. The collective testimony and documentary evidence established that ODC met its burden to prove that Adams' allegations against Judge Powell of criminal conduct, unethical and improper behavior, abuse of power and mental deficiencies, and her accusations against Judge Fox of criminal conduct, unethical and other improper behavior, are false.

Once ODC meets its burden to prove the allegations are false, the burden shifts to Adams to establish that the allegations are true or that following a reasonable, diligent inquiry, Adams formed an objective reasonable belief that the allegations are true. *Price*, 732 A.2d at 604. Adams many times vehemently expressed her subjective belief that her allegations are true; however, whether she "believed [the statements] to be true" is not relevant to our analysis. *Price*, 732 A.2d at 604. "[T]he rules of disciplinary conduct

measure the ethical behavior of the members of the bar by the standard of the reasonable lawyer” because “a subjective approach would permit lawyers to defend the most wanton and scurrilous attacks upon innocent third parties by stating that they personally believed it was true.” *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Surrick*, 749 A.2d 441, 445 (Pa. 2000). Consequently, “an objective standard, which examines the factual basis for the assertion, is necessary to protect the public, the profession and the courts.” *Price*, 732 A.2d at 604.

Upon this record, we find that Adams failed to meet her burden. The testimony of Adams and Mr. Perkins failed to establish or support the truth of any of Adams’ numerous allegations and further failed to demonstrate she had an objective reasonable basis to believe the allegations were true based on a reasonably diligent inquiry that she undertook. The basic thrust of Adams’ testimony is that the transcripts of court hearings and court rulings in *Walsh* pieced together show “malfeasance” and a “foolproof scheme” of RICO that support her allegations. N.T. II at 289-299. However, we find Adams’ allegations against judges resulted not from any reasoned deduction based upon objective facts, but from her own perceptions, suppositions, interpretation of events, and conclusions based on her dissatisfaction with rulings in the *Walsh* litigation. Likewise, Adams’ testimony and Mr. Perkins’ testimony did not establish the truth of Adams’ allegations that Judge Powell was mentally incompetent.

Adams’ documentary evidence similarly failed to support her claims. Of particular issue is Adams’ exhibit R-11, a self-authored, self-titled five-part “Act 135 Packet” comprised of thousands of pages of various and assorted documents compiled by Adams. During her own testimony and examination of witnesses, Adams relied on selected portions of exhibit R-11. The Committee admitted these portions into evidence, but did not admit the full exhibit. Adams claims that the Committee erred in not admitting

the entire exhibit; we conclude that the Committee properly admitted only those portions of the exhibit that were actually utilized by Adams. The record demonstrates that Adams was never prohibited from using the entire exhibit; rather, she chose which portions of the exhibit to use and the Committee admitted those portions into evidence. We find that the portions of R-11 that were properly admitted do not bolster the truth of Adams' claims. The record demonstrated that Adams had no objective facts upon which she could reasonably conclude her statements against the judges were true and she repeatedly made false statements assailing the qualifications and integrity of Judge Powell and Judge Fox.

Adams' false allegations formed the basis for additional rules violations. Adams violated RPC 3.5(a) and 3.5(d), in that her voluminous correspondence to Judge Powell, his staff, and other members of the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas, falsely accusing Judge Powell of criminal and other improper conduct and mental incompetence through abusive language and at times threatening jail and a protest march, served no legitimate purpose in the *Walsh* litigation other than to improperly influence the court's decision-making and disrupt the Act 135 proceedings. See RPC 3.5, cmt. 4 ("[t]he advocate's function is to present evidence and argument so that the cause may be decided according to law," and not because of the advocate's "abusive or obstreperous conduct." Adams' conduct violated RPC 8.4(c) by her repeated false accusations against Judge Powell and Judge Fox, which were deliberately made or made with reckless ignorance of their truth or falsity. *Price*, 732 A.2d at 606. Adams' false accusations in court filings and communications to the court prejudiced the administration of justice, in violation of RPC 8.4(d), as she attempted to manipulate the outcome of proceedings through her dishonest conduct. *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Anonymous Attorney*,

327 A.3d 192, 207 (Pa. 2024).

Appropriate Discipline

Having concluded that Adams engaged in professional misconduct, this matter is ripe for the determination of discipline. In weighing appropriate discipline, we consider that the primary function of the attorney disciplinary system is to protect the public from unfit attorneys and to maintain the integrity of the legal system. *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. John Keller*, 506 A.2d 872, 875 (Pa. 1986). The disciplinary system also seeks to deter similar misconduct. *In re Dennis Iulo*, 766 A.2d 335, 339 (Pa. 2001). There is no per se discipline for attorney misconduct in Pennsylvania; each disciplinary matter is considered individually. *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Robert Lucarini*, 472 A. 2d 186, 190 (Pa. 1983). Discipline must be tailored to reflect circumstances that are aggravating or mitigating. *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Anthony C. Cappuccio*, 48 A.3d 1231, 1238 (Pa. 2012).

(i) Aggravating and Mitigating Factors

On this record, we find weighty aggravating factors. Significantly, Adams failed to recognize and accept responsibility for her serious misconduct and its consequences and failed to demonstrate genuine remorse. Rather, the evidence demonstrated that Adams sees nothing wrong with her conduct and remains intractable in her positions. When pressed to reflect on her actions, she admitted only that she could have done a better job with her federal complaint. Throughout these proceedings, Adams has never shied away from her false accusations against Judge Powell and Judge Fox and has herself termed them as “extreme,” “copious,” “outrageous,” “harsh,” and “shocking.” See ODC-22 (cover letter and introductory pp. 1-2) and N.T. II at 332, 333. Nonetheless, Adams firmly believes she is justified in making the allegations because she

is championing justice and protecting her clients' rights, which she contends excuses professional misconduct under the ethical rules.

We take this opportunity to correct Adams' perplexing and unsupported position. There is no justification under the ethical rules for Adams' false attacks on the integrity and qualifications of judges in court filings and other communications that would excuse her misconduct and alleviate the imposition of discipline. Adams' recourse when faced with court rulings she did not agree with was to file for reconsideration, file an appeal or file a complaint with the Judicial Conduct Board. Adams pursued these appropriate courses of action. However, dissatisfied with the results and decisions of her appeals and complaints, Adams relentlessly pursued her narrative of a criminal conspiracy and other improper behavior by judges using methods that violated the Rules of Professional Conduct. While Adams believes she is protecting the integrity of the profession by calling out judges as "corrupt," "criminal," "dirty," "disgraceful," "dishonest," and acting as a "mad man," among other inflammatory accusations, it is Adams herself who has damaged the integrity of the profession and eroded the public's trust in the legal system by her stream of false invective, for which she has shown no remorse.

Of further significance to our analysis is that these disciplinary proceedings did not deter Adams' behavior. Instead of pausing to consider her statements and their consequences, she continued to hurl false accusations against Judge Powell and Judge Fox in her verified disciplinary filings and during the disciplinary hearing itself, and expanded the scope of her targets by accusing disciplinary counsel of "prosecutorial misconduct." Adams' Brief on Exceptions, p. 9. Adams' relentless attacks during these proceedings accentuate her failure to apprehend the wrongfulness of her conduct and serve as an aggravating factor for discipline.

In mitigation, we assign weight to Adams' lack of prior discipline during her 30 years of practice. See *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Philip A. Valentino*, 730 A.2d 479, 483 (Pa. 1999) (the Court considered Valentino's lack of prior disciplinary history when it imposed a five-year suspension instead of disbarment). We find no other mitigation.

(ii) Case Precedent

The decisional law supports the Board's recommendation for a five year suspension. Attorneys who have engaged in similar serious misconduct by making false accusations against judicial officers, and who lacked a record of discipline but failed to express remorse, received sanctions ranging from a five year suspension to disbarment.

We begin our analysis by reviewing guiding decisions issued by the Court. In *Price, supra*, Price filed three separate court documents that contained false allegations against two district justices.⁷ He filed: (i) a motion for reconsideration of a trial court order and accused a district justice of, *inter alia*, "eagerly participat[ing] in an undercover effort" against Price and "curry[ing] favor with the state police and attorney general"; (ii) a "Notice of Jurisdictional Defect" with a district justice and accused that district justice of official oppression and collusion; and (iii) a "Notice of Objections to Jurisdiction" in the trial court that accused a district justice of abuse of office, "fixing" citations, prosecutorial bias, and sexual harassment of constituents, and accused a different district justice of "coercion over various law enforcement or political officials."⁸ *Price*, 732 A.2d at 602.

⁷ At that time, magisterial district judges in Pennsylvania were called "district justices."

⁸ Also, Price on two occasions completed Department of Public Welfare forms relating to his clients and in the section designated to be completed by "medical providers" signed the forms "Dr. Neil Price, J.D.," "diagnosed" his clients, and stated they were "incapacitated." *Price*, 732 A.2d at 602.

The Court found that Price had presented no evidence establishing a factual basis to support his allegations, and that his “suspicions” did not give rise to an objective, reasonable belief that his allegations were true. 732 A.2d at 604. The Court explained why a five year suspension was warranted for Price’s false accusations:

In determining the appropriate discipline to be imposed, . . . [w]e note that even at this stage of the proceeding, Respondent denies that he engaged in any wrongdoing and submits that he should not be subject to any form of discipline. This indicates that Respondent has no understanding of the potential damage he may have caused to the victims’ reputations and to the functioning of our legal system, which is based upon good faith representations to the court. Moreover, the false accusations against District Justice Farra and District Justice Berkheimer included attacks upon their performance of official duties. Such scandalous accusations erode the public confidence in the judicial system in general and in these District Justices in particular. 732 A.2d at 606-607.

Like Price, Adams falsely attacked Judge Powell’s and Judge Fox’s performance of their official duties, continued her false attacks through the disciplinary proceedings, and exhibited no understanding of the potential damage to the judges’ reputations and to the functioning of our legal system.

In *Surrick, supra*, Surrick falsely accused two judges of wrongdoing in an appeal filed in the Superior Court. Surrick alleged that a Court of Common Pleas judge “fixed” a verdict in a civil matter in the Delaware County Court of Common Pleas and that a Superior Court judge issued orders and decisions against Surrick to gain favor with a Pennsylvania Supreme Court Justice. *Id.* at 446-448. In suspending Surrick for five years, the Court elaborated on the harm arising from Surrick’s ethical misconduct:

An accusation of judicial impropriety is not a matter to be taken frivolously. An attorney bringing such an accusation has an obligation to obtain some minimal factual support before leveling charges that carry explosive repercussions. When an

attorney makes an accusation of judicial impropriety without first undertaking a reasonable investigation of the truth of that accusation, he injures the public, which depends upon the unbiased integrity of the judiciary, the profession itself, whose coin of the realm is their ability to rely upon the honesty of each other in their daily endeavors, and the courts, who must retain the respect of the public and the profession in order to function as the arbiter of justice. "Truth is the cornerstone of the judicial system; a license to practice law requires allegiance and fidelity to the truth." [citing case]. When a lawyer holds the truth to be of so little value that it can be recklessly disregarded when his temper and personal paranoia dictate, that lawyer should not be permitted to represent the public before the courts of this Commonwealth. *Id.*

Adams' false accusations in the instant matter are very similar to Surrick's false accusations and should be addressed by a similar sanction. Like Surrick, Adams holds the truth "to be of so little value" that she has injured the public, the profession itself, and the courts.

In the years since the Court issued *Price* and *Surrick*, the Board has considered other matters involving false accusations against members of the judiciary. Many of these matters resulted in a five year suspension. In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Daniel C. Barrish*, No. 130 DB 2004 (D. Bd. Rpt. 12/6/2005) (S. Ct. Order 3/15/2006), Barrish received a five year suspension for falsely alleging in two pleadings filed in the Supreme Court and in an article published over the internet that two judges were involved in case fixing. Barrish expressed no remorse for his conduct. In more than 30 years of practice, Barrish had no disciplinary history.

In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. William Z. Warren*, No. 151 DB 2007 (D. Bd. Rpt. 8/15/2008) (S. Ct. Order 2/2/2009), Warren received a five year suspension for falsely accusing two Common Pleas Court judges in pleadings filed with a trial court and the Superior Court of acting maliciously with indifference to his rights, conspiring to extort

a settlement and deprive him of his rights, and committing perjury, bribery, and obstruction of justice. Warren did not appear at the disciplinary hearing. Warren had practiced law for more than 30 years with no record of discipline.

In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Donald A. Bailey*, No 11 DB 2011 (D. Bd. Rpt. 5/1/2013) (S. Ct. Order 10/2/2013), Bailey falsely accused federal judges in a Third Circuit filing for a rehearing en banc of, *inter alia*, “misbehaving,” illegally pressuring disciplinary authorities, being “intellectually deficient,” raw abuse of power and favoritism, personal animus against Bailey, and involvement in a “clique” to “get” Bailey. In assessing discipline, the Board considered Bailey’s lack of remorse and regret for his false accusations and his prior record of private discipline, balanced by his extensive history of community service, military service, service as a Congressman and Pennsylvania Auditor General, and evidence of good character. The Board determined that a five-year suspension was consistent with sanctions imposed in *Price* and *Surrick* for similar misconduct, and served to “preserve public respect for our judiciary by protecting it from unwarranted and inappropriate attacks.” The Court imposed a five-year suspension.

In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Robert J. Murphy*, No. 206 DB 2016 (D. Bd. Rpt. 9/3/2019) (S. Ct. Order 12/19/2019), while representing a claimant before two Workers’ Compensation Judges, and in subsequent filings in the Commonwealth Court and the Supreme Court, Murphy falsely alleged that those judges and opposing counsel had engaged in improper, unethical *ex parte* communications and other unethical behavior, and that they had actually admitted to having done so. Murphy also filed frivolous motions to recuse the two judges based on false allegations. The Board found that Murphy lacked remorse for his actions and failed to appreciate the effect of his conduct on the profession. Murphy had practiced law for many decades and had no

history of professional discipline, but this factor did not merit a suspension for less than five years. The Court imposed a five-year suspension.

In the recent matter of *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Richard Joseph Silverberg*, No. 172 DB 2023 (D. Bd. Rpt. 3/11/2025) (S. Ct. Order 5/16/2025), Silverberg falsely attacked the integrity and qualifications of a trial judge in two civil matters filed in the Philadelphia Court of Common Pleas and in a federal complaint. Silverberg accused the judge of, *inter alia*, “engag[ing] in illegitimate and improper action as part of a pattern of biased conduct,” conspiring with the City of Philadelphia to pursue sham litigation and to use “the court system to carry out a corrupt plan or scheme on behalf of themselves,” acting dishonestly, and violating criminal statutes. In weighing discipline, the Board considered in aggravation that Silverberg lacked remorse and failed to appear at the hearing, though he participated by filing an answer to the Petition for Discipline and filing briefs. As well, the Board noted that Silverberg continued to level false accusations in additional court filings he initiated during the disciplinary proceedings, evidencing his lack of regard for his actions. In mitigation, the Board considered Silverberg’s lack of discipline over a nearly 40-year career. This combination of serious misconduct, weighty aggravation, and little mitigation informed the Board’s recommendation for a five-year suspension, which the Court ultimately imposed.

Moving to disbarment cases, we review two matters. In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Eugene Andrew Wrona*, No. 123 DB 2004 (D. Bd. Rpt. 3/31/2006) (S. Ct. Order 6/29/2006), Wrona falsely accused a Common Pleas Court judge of altering court audiotapes, having knowledge that a court monitor provided false testimony, failing to correct the record, suborning perjury, and engaging in criminal conduct. Wrona’s accusations were contained in multiple letters to media outlets, pleadings, court filings,

Judicial Conduct Board filings, affidavits, and internet postings. Wrona's accusations against the judge also included "domestic terrorism" and a comparison to "priests who molested young boys." The Board acknowledged the guiding decisions of *Price* and *Surrick*, which resulted in suspensions for five years, but concluded that Wrona's matter warranted disbarment because he represented an egregious example of being unfit to practice law. The Board considered that the case Wrona litigated where he engaged in the misconduct was the first court case Wrona had handled on his own, and there was no evidence of "steady, competent legal work to help mitigate the severity of his misconduct." The Court disbarred Wrona.

In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Joseph R. Reisinger*, No. 44 DB 2015 (D. Bd. Rpt. 8/15/2016) (S. Ct. Order 3/31/2017), Reisinger was disbarred for his multiple false allegations in numerous court filings against three judges and other court personnel. He falsely alleged that the judges, *inter alia*, intentionally conspired with Reisinger's opposing parties, were not fit to serve as jurists, were corrupt, engaged in a criminal conspiracy and criminal acts, and "illegally rigged" cases. Reisinger's accusations were noticed by the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania in connection with his filing of an Application for Exercise of King's Bench Power, wherein he accused a judge of committing various crimes in his judicial capacity. The Court denied the Application, and cautioned Reisinger as to his "vituperative and unprofessional language" with regard to the judge. This caution did not have the intended effect as Reisinger continued his accusations. In assessing appropriate discipline, the Board noted Reisinger's failure to appear at the disciplinary hearing and lack of remorse as aggravating factors, while also weighing his lack of prior discipline in a legal career of four decades. The Board recommended disbarment based on Reisinger's pattern of persistent and disruptive

misconduct.

Our survey of precedent reveals that not every matter involving false attacks against judges has resulted in a lengthy suspension or disbarment. In the recent matter of *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Lisa Ann Johnson*, No. 111 DB 2023 (D. Bd. Rpt. 3/31/2025) (S. Ct. Order 8/19/2025), Johnson violated numerous Rules of Professional Conduct while litigating her clients' case before the Environmental Hearing Board. The Disciplinary Board found that Johnson's misconduct flowed from her abject incompetence in a forum before which she had no experience. During the litigation, Johnson filed an Opposition to Motions for Nonsuit and a Demand for the Removal of the assigned judge. In these filings, Johnson accused the judge of violating her clients' rights and retaliatory conduct and claimed that the judge "did not have the temperament" to be a judge. These accusations were false and violated RPC 8.2(a).

At the disciplinary hearing, Johnson acknowledged that making accusations against a judge was very serious conduct and apologized for her "tone" and "language," which she conceded had been rude, harsh and unprofessional, and driven by her emotional involvement in her clients' case. She credibly testified that she had learned to temper her outrage, and expressed sincere regret for the harm her actions caused her clients. Johnson put forth credible evidence that she had taken voluntary, concrete steps to remediate her severe incompetence and become a better practitioner. On the totality of the record, which included consideration of Johnson's blemish-free record of discipline, the Board majority recommended a one-year period of suspension. Three Board members dissented in favor of a six month suspension and one Board member dissented in favor of a one year and one day suspension. The Court imposed a one-year suspension with six months served and six months stayed with probation.

In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Robert Alton Wilson*, No. 150 DB 2007 (D. Bd. Rpt. 10/22/2008) (S. Ct. Order 2/2/2009), the Court accepted the Board's recommendation and imposed a public censure on Wilson for his violation of RPC 8.2(a), where he alleged in a reply brief filed in the Superior Court that the decision of the lower court judge was politically motivated and there was an appearance of impropriety. Wilson later acknowledged at the disciplinary hearing that he should not have used the language and explained he did not intend to malign the trial judge. The Board found that Wilson "become too personally involved in the matter and lost his objectivity and professionalism" in that single filing.

In *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. David Foster Gould, III*, No. 160 DB 2016 (D. Bd. Order 6/20/2018), the Board concluded that Gould violated RPC 8.2(a) when he falsely alleged in a federal complaint that a trial judge was biased and predisposed to rule in favor of municipal authorities. The underlying matter involved Gould's personal litigation concerning his real property. Similar to *Wilson*, the Board concluded that Gould had lost his objectivity and professionalism in a single filing and imposed a public reprimand to address his misconduct.

Comparing the controlling precedent to the instant case, we conclude that the weight of the precedent tilts in favor of a five-year suspension of Adams' law license. The scope and nature of Adams' false accusations during a four-year period are akin to the false allegations made in *Price*, *Surrick*, *Silverberg*, *Murphy*, *Bailey*, *Warren*, and *Barrish* and warrant the same discipline. Adams' multiple false accusations against jurists of conspiracy, collusion, fixing the outcome of litigation, criminality (fraud, theft by extortion, robbing and stealing), dishonesty, abuse of power, bias, and mental infirmity in her federal complaint, motion to disqualify Judge Powell, two letters to the court copying

numerous others, and nine emails to Judge Powell's staff and attorneys involved in the Act 135 litigation, mirror the false accusations in the cited matters and readily suggest that a lengthy suspension is necessary. Similar to respondents in the cited matters, Adams doggedly pursued her allegations during the entirety of the disciplinary proceedings and has shown no contrition for her actions or any inclination to cease her misconduct. In mitigation, like Silverberg, Murphy, Bailey, Warren, and Barrish, Adams has practiced law for decades without discipline. Nevertheless, as in the cited cases, this mitigating factor does not compel a lesser form of discipline.

While the record establishes Adams' very serious misconduct and a troublingly unrepentant attitude with little mitigation, we find that disbarment is not appropriate here. The two disbarment matters, *Wrona* and *Reisinger*, have an elevated combination of facts and aggravating circumstances in terms of the nature of the accusations, the spread of the accusations, and the persistence of the accusations that warranted the severe sanction of disbarment. Equally so, discipline less than a five-year suspension does not align with the precedent and is not appropriate. Adams' matter may be distinguished from the matters cited above that resulted in a short suspension, public censure, and public reprimand on a variety of points. First, the number of court filings, letters and emails in which Adams made her false accusations far exceeds that of the cited matters. Second, Adams failed to admit any wrongdoing, unlike the respondents in *Johnson* and *Wilson*, who admitted the wrongfulness of their misconduct. Third, and perhaps most compelling as to why lesser discipline is not appropriate here, Adams never ceased her false attacks in disciplinary filings and at the disciplinary hearing and there is nothing in the record to suggest that she will stop, as opposed to the cited matters, where there was no evidence that the respondents continued their false attacks. These factors

strongly indicate that a less weighty discipline will not suffice to deter Adam's repeated false attacks on members of the judiciary.

The instant case is distinguished by the volume and malicious nature of Adams' false allegations against judges over a period of four years that continue to the present time. This misconduct amply demonstrates Adams' unfitness to practice law. On this record, we conclude that a five-year period of suspension will fulfill the predominant purpose of the disciplinary system "to protect the public from unfit attorneys and to maintain the integrity of the legal system." *Office of Disciplinary Counsel v. Robert Costigan*, 584 A.2d 296, 300 (Pa. 1990). As the Court emphasized in *Price*, a false attack against a judge diminishes public confidence in the judiciary and affects the functioning of the legal system. We believe this diminished public confidence has the potential to make the rule of law vulnerable, detract from the legitimacy of the courts, and perhaps subvert their authority. For all of these reasons, a five year suspension places the public and the legal profession on notice that the Court will not countenance false attacks against members of the judiciary.

IV. RECOMMENDATION

The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania recommends that the Respondent, Olivia A. Adams, be Suspended for five years from the practice of law in this Commonwealth.

It is further recommended that the expenses incurred in the investigation and prosecution of this matter are to be paid by the Respondent.

Respectfully submitted,

THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA

S/Joshua M. Bloom

By: _____
Joshua M. Bloom, Member

Date: January 23, 2026

Vice-Chair Vance and Member Ellsworth dissent in favor of a suspension for three years.