

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

OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL,	:	No. 63 DB 2021
Petitioner	:	
	:	File No. C4-20-177
v.	:	
	:	Attorney Registration No. 20133
GEORGE W. BILLS, JR.	:	
Respondent	:	(Allegheny County)

ORDER

AND NOW, this 25<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2021, 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.

Within thirty (30) days from the date of this Order, Respondent shall submit to the Prothonotary of the Board and Disciplinary Counsel proof that he has:

1. Refunded \$1,000 to Amy Jo Keiper.

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**

By Order dated May 25, 2021, the Board directed that Respondent, George W. Bills, Jr. receive a Public Reprimand with condition to refund \$1,000.

In October 2019, Amy Jo Keiper entered a plea of guilty in the Court of Common Pleas of Cambria County to drug related criminal charges, harassment, and filing a false report. Ms. Keiper believed the plea agreement was based on incarceration for a period of twelve to eighteen months, and would include an opportunity for placement in a rehabilitation program. Ms. Keiper was represented by the Cambria County Public Defender's Office. In November 2019, Ms. Keiper contacted Respondent about representing her for sentencing or possibly withdrawing her guilty plea. According to Ms. Keiper, Respondent informed her that he could get rehabilitation included in her sentence. Although Respondent texted Ms. Keiper and told her to send a cashier's check for \$1,000, he did not communicate in writing to Ms. Keiper the basis or rate of his fee to represent her. By cashier's check dated December 9, 2019, Ms. Keiper paid the requested \$1,000. Respondent negotiated the check but did not deposit the proceeds into an IOLTA or other trust account.

Prior to sentencing, Respondent's communication with Ms. Keiper was sparse.

He failed to respond to several texts from his client. In early January 2020, Respondent met with his client at the Cambria County Prison, at which time Ms. Keiper provided Respondent with the few documents she had in her possession pertinent to the case. Based on the short meeting, which Ms. Keiper described as lasting approximately five minutes, Ms. Keiper believed that Respondent had arranged to have her sent to a rehabilitation facility.

On January 9, 2020, Respondent appeared on behalf of Ms. Keiper for her sentencing. At that time, while in the courtroom, Respondent had to obtain from the public defender the contents of Ms. Keiper's file in order to review her case. Ms. Keiper was sentenced to a 24 to 60 month period of incarceration on certain of the charges, and a period of probation to run concurrent with her incarceration. There was no inclusion of a rehabilitation component in the judgment of sentence. The next day, Respondent dropped Ms. Keiper's papers at the prison and had no further communication with his client, even though Ms. Keiper called and left messages for Respondent about attempting to have her sentence modified or take an appeal.

On January 30, 2020, Ms. Keiper filed a Petition for Post-Conviction Collateral Relief and also filed a letter averring that she wanted to exercise her right to appeal and had done everything in her power to communicate with Respondent by texts, calls and letters, but he never replied.

On February 5, 2020, Respondent filed a Motion to Withdraw as Ms. Keiper's counsel, which Motion was granted.

Separately, Respondent failed to list a business/operating account maintained or used by him in the practice of law on his PA Attorney's Annual Fee Form for the years 2017-2018, 2018-2019, 2019-2020, and 2020-2021.

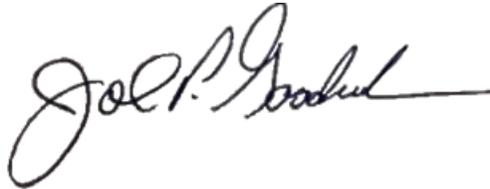
By his conduct, Respondent violated the following Rules of Professional Conduct (“RPC”) and Pennsylvania Rules of Disciplinary Enforcement (“Pa.R.D.E.”):

1. RPC 1.4(a)(4) – In that, Respondent failed to promptly comply with reasonable requests for information when his client attempted to communicate with him seeking reconsideration, or a direct appeal, of the judgment of sentence in her case.
2. RPC 1.5(b) – In that, although Respondent had not regularly represented Ms. Keiper, he failed to communicate to her, in writing, the basis or rate of his fee before or within a reasonable time after commencing representation.
3. RPC 1.15(b) – In that, Respondent failed to hold Rule 1.15 Funds separate from his own property, failed to identify those funds as an advance payment of fee, and failed to appropriately safeguard those funds, when Respondent failed to deposit in an IOLTA or other trust account, the proceeds of the \$1,000 cashier’s check.
4. RPC 1.15(i) – In that, Respondent failed to deposit in a trust account legal fees paid in advance, to be withdrawn by Respondent only as fees were earned.
5. RPC 1.16(d) – In that, upon termination of Respondent’s representation of Ms. Keiper on or about January 31, 2020, Respondent failed to refund the advance payment of fee that was paid to Respondent and which had not been earned by him.
6. RPC 8.4(d) – In that, Respondent engaged in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice.

7. Pa.R.D.E. 219(d)(1)(v) – In that, Respondent failed to list a business/operating account on his PA Attorney’s Annual Fee Form for four separate registration years.

Respondent has a prior history of discipline consisting of an Informal Admonition administered on April 10, 2018, with the condition to refund a total of \$2,800 in three client matters.

Respondent’s 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](http://www.padisciplinaryboard.org).

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joel P. Gabel". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

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Board Chair