

VIRGINIA:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND

**VIRGINIA STATE BAR EX REL
THIRD DISTRICT, SECTION II COMMITTEE
VSB Docket Nos. 25-032-134148 & 25-032-133062**

Complainant,

v.

Case No. CL25-3452-CGC

VAUGHAN CHRISTOPHER JONES

Respondent.

**AGREED DISPOSITION MEMORANDUM ORDER
FOR A ONE-YEAR SUSPENSION WITH TERMS**

This matter came to be heard on August 26, 2025, before a Circuit Court Three-Judge panel, upon the joint request of the parties for the Court to accept the Agreed Disposition for a One-Year Suspension with Terms, endorsed by the parties and offered to the Court as provided by the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The panel consisted of the Honorable Robert B. Rigney, Judge of the Fourth Judicial Circuit, Designated Chief Judge, the Honorable Helivi L. Holland, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit, and the Honorable Stephen Anderson Nelson, Judge of the Tenth Judicial Circuit. Vaughan Christopher Jones, Respondent, was present and was represented by counsel Craig S. Cooley. The Virginia State Bar appeared through its Bar Counsel Renu M. Brennan. The Chief Judge polled the members of the panel as to whether any of them were aware of any personal or financial interest or bias which would preclude any of them from fairly hearing the matter to which Judges Holland and Nelson responded in the negative. Court Reporter Jennifer Thomas of Chandler and Halasz, Inc., P. O. Box 1975, Mechanicsville, VA 23116, telephone 804-730-1222, after being duly sworn, reported the hearing and transcribed the proceedings.

WHEREFORE, upon consideration of the Agreed Disposition for a One-Year Suspension with Terms, the arguments of the parties, and after due deliberation,

It is **ORDERED** that the Circuit Court accepts the Agreed Disposition for a One-Year Suspension with Terms, with the additional term that Respondent remain under contract with the Virginia Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program until the termination of his suspension on March 3, 2027. The additional term is as follows:

LAWYER ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Respondent will remain under a written contract with the Virginia Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program, JLAP, until March 3, 2027.

Respondent authorizes JLAP to provide monthly reports to Bar Counsel regarding Respondent's compliance with JLAP's contract.

Pursuant to Paragraph 13-18.O, Bar Counsel will monitor Respondent's compliance with the JLAP contract. If Bar Counsel determines that Respondent is not in compliance with his contract, Bar Counsel will serve notice requiring Respondent to show cause why the alternative disposition will not be imposed.

Respondent shall receive a sanction of a One-Year Suspension with Terms. The Agreed Disposition for a One-Year Suspension with Terms is attached to and incorporated in this Memorandum Order. The alternative sanction for failure to comply with the Terms is a Three-Year Suspension.

It is further **ORDERED** that the sanction is effective on March 3, 2026.

It is further **ORDERED** that Respondent must comply with the requirements of Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-29 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The Respondent shall forthwith give notice by certified mail of the suspension of his license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia, to all clients for whom he is currently handling matters and to all opposing Attorneys and presiding Judges in pending litigation. The Respondent shall also make appropriate arrangements for the disposition of matters then in his care in conformity with the

wishes of his clients. Respondent shall give such notice immediately and in no event later than 14 days of the effective date of this Memorandum Order, and make such arrangements as are required herein as soon as is practicable and in no event later than 45 days of the effective date of this Memorandum Order. The Respondent shall also furnish proof to the Clerk of the Disciplinary System of the Virginia State Bar within 60 days of the effective date of the Suspension that such notices have been timely given and such arrangements have been made for the disposition of matters.

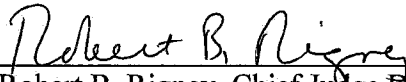
It is further ORDERED that if the Respondent is not handling any client matters on the effective date of this Memorandum Order he shall submit an affidavit to that effect to the Clerk of the Disciplinary System at the Virginia State Bar within 60 days of the effective day of this Memorandum Order. The Board, or a three-judge panel, if Respondent so timely elects, shall decide all issues concerning the adequacy of the notice and arrangements required herein. The burden of proof is on the Respondent to show compliance. If the Respondent fails to show compliance, the Board, or a three-judge panel if Respondent so timely elects, may impose a sanction of Revocation or additional Suspension for failure to comply with the requirements of subparagraph 13-29.

The Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs pursuant to ¶13-9 E. of the Rules.

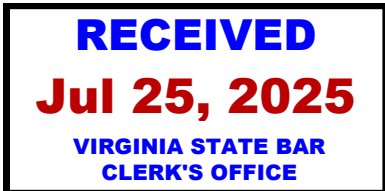
A copy teste of this Order shall be mailed to Respondent Vaughan Christopher Jones at Vaughan C. Jones, 1622 W Main St., Richmond, Virginia 23220-4633, his last address of record with the Virginia State Bar; with an attested copy to Craig S. Cooley, Respondent's Counsel, at John Marshall Inn of Court, 3000 Idlewood Avenue, P.O. Box 7268, Richmond, VA 23221; Renu M. Brennan, Bar Counsel, Virginia State Bar, 1111 East Main Street, Suite 700,

Richmond, VA 23219-0026; and to the Clerk of the Disciplinary System, Virginia State Bar,
1111 East Main Street, Suite 700, Richmond, Virginia 23219-0026.

ENTERED THIS 29th DAY OF AUGUST, 2025.



Robert B. Rigney, Chief Judge Designate
Fourth Judicial Circuit



VIRGINIA:

IN THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR THE CITY OF RICHMOND

**VIRGINIA STATE BAR EX REL
THIRD DISTRICT, SECTION II COMMITTEE
VSB Docket Nos. 25-032-134148 & 25-032-133062**

Complainant,

v.

Case No. CL25-3452-CGC

VAUGHAN CHRISTOPHER JONES

Respondent.

**AGREED DISPOSITION
(ONE-YEAR SUSPENSION WITH TERMS)**

Pursuant to the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-6.H and Va. Code Section 54.1-3935, the Virginia State Bar, by Renu Brennan, Bar Counsel, and Vaughan C. Jones, Respondent, and Craig S. Cooley, Respondent’s counsel, hereby enter into the following Agreed Disposition for a One-Year Suspension with Terms arising out of the referenced matter.

**VSB DOCKET NO. 25-032-133062
COMPLAINANT: KEVIN KUSTALE MITCHELL**

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. At all relevant times, Respondent was licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia.
2. The Circuit Court for the City of Richmond appointed Respondent to represent Kevin Kustale Mitchell (“Mitchell”) at his criminal trial.
3. On December 1, 2022, Mitchell was tried and convicted of first-degree murder and use of a firearm in the commission of a felony.

4. Mitchell's sentencing hearing was held March 24, 2023. By order entered April 5, 2023, Mitchell was sentenced to life and three years, and Respondent was appointed to represent Mitchell on appeal.
5. After Mitchell was sentenced, Mitchell told Respondent that he wanted to pursue an appeal.
6. On March 24, 2023, Respondent noted Mitchell's appeal to the Court of Appeals of Virginia ("CAV").
7. Despite Mitchell's attempts to communicate with Respondent, including through letters, calls, and other people, Respondent never communicated with Mitchell about his appeal, or at all, after Mitchell told Respondent that he wanted to pursue an appeal.
8. In May 2023, Respondent requested an extension of time to file the opening brief. The CAV granted Respondent until July 5, 2023 to file the opening brief. Respondent timely filed the opening brief.
9. On August 15, 2023, Respondent filed a second amended opening brief. The opening brief did not comply with Rules 5A:19(f) and 5A:20(c)(2) governing opening briefs because all references were to the transcript rather than the record.
10. By email the next day, August 16, 2023, the Clerk's office of the CAV notified Respondent, in red text, that the assignments of error were insufficient under Rule 5A:20(c)(2) and informed Respondent that he had 14 days to file an amended brief.
11. Respondent did not file an amended brief correcting the assignments of error.
12. By email dated September 6, 2023, a friend of Mitchell's contacted Respondent on Mitchell's behalf and requested Mitchell's trial transcripts. Respondent did not respond to Mitchell's friend or to Mitchell. Respondent did not provide Mitchell with his trial transcripts or communicate with Mitchell about anything that had transpired in his appeal.

13. On September 12, 2023, the Commonwealth requested an extension to September 21 to file its brief. The CAV granted the extension, and the Commonwealth filed its brief on September 21, 2023.
14. By email dated October 20, 2023, the Clerk's office of the CAV again advised Respondent of the deficient Assignments of Error and noted in red text that "an exact reference to the pages of the record or appendix where each assignment of error was preserved in the trial court" was required. The Clerk's office provided Respondent with a link to a template of an opening brief and directed Mitchell to file an amended opening brief within 14 days.
15. Respondent did not file an amended opening brief.
16. On November 21, 2023, the CAV issued a rule to show cause as to why Mitchell's appeal should not be dismissed for failure to comply with Rule 5A:20(c). The CAV again allowed Mitchell another 14 days to file amended opening brief correcting the deficiency. The Rule concluded:

If the appellant fails to file a timely response to this rule to show cause, or if such response is insufficient, the appeal may be dismissed or the Court may 'impose such other penalty as it deems appropriate for non-compliance with these Rules.' Rule 5A:1A(a).
17. Rule 5A:1A is entitled "Penalties for Non-compliance; Show Cause; Dismissal. Rule 5A:1A(a) provides in part, "This Court may dismiss an appeal or impose such other penalty as it deems appropriate for non-compliance with these Rules..."
18. Respondent did not respond to the Rule to Show Cause and did not file an amended brief correcting the assignments of error.
19. By letter dated February 12, 2024, the Commonwealth provided supplemental legal authority to the CAV, with a copy to Respondent.

20. By order entered March 20, 2024, the CAV dismissed Mitchell's appeal because "Mitchell has not cured the deficiency in the opening brief despite being afforded multiple opportunities to do so."
21. Respondent did not notify Mitchell of the dismissal of his appeal or the reason Mitchell's appeal was dismissed. Respondent also did not inform Mitchell of Mitchell's options upon the dismissal of his appeal, including pursuit of a delayed appeal pursuant to Va. Code § 19.2-321.1¹ within six months of March 20, 2024. Respondent did not advise Mitchell of

¹ § 19.2-321.1. Motion in the Court of Appeals for delayed appeal in criminal cases.

A. Filing and content of motion.

When, due to the error, neglect, or fault of counsel representing the appellant, or of the court reporter, or of the circuit court or an officer or employee thereof, an appeal, in whole or in part, in a criminal case has (i) never been initiated, (ii) been dismissed for failure to adhere to proper form, procedures, or time limits in the perfection of the appeal, (iii) been dismissed in part because at least one assignment of error did not adhere to proper form of procedures, or (iv) the conviction has been affirmed for failure to file or timely file the indispensable transcript or written statement of facts as required by law or by the Rules of Supreme Court, then a motion for leave to pursue a delayed appeal may be filed in the Court of Appeals within six months after the appeal has been dismissed, the conviction has been affirmed, or the circuit court judgment sought to be appealed has become final, whichever is later. Such motion shall identify the circuit court and the style, date, and circuit court record number of the judgment sought to be appealed, and, if one was assigned in a prior attempt to appeal the judgment, shall give the Court of Appeals record number in that proceeding, and shall set forth the specific facts establishing the said error, neglect, or fault. If the error, neglect, or fault is alleged to be that of an attorney representing the appellant, the motion shall be accompanied by the affidavit of the attorney whose error, neglect, or fault is alleged, verifying the specific facts alleged in the motion, and certifying that the appellant is not personally responsible, in whole or in part, for the error, neglect, or fault causing loss of the original opportunity for appeal.

- B. Service, response, and disposition. Such motion shall be served on the attorney for the Commonwealth and the Attorney General, in accordance with the Rules of Supreme Court. If the Commonwealth disputes the facts alleged in the motion, or contends that those facts do not entitle the appellant to a delayed appeal under this section, the motion shall be denied without prejudice to the appellant's right to seek a delayed appeal by means of petition for a writ of habeas corpus. Otherwise, the Court of Appeals shall, if the motion meets the requirements of this section, grant appellant leave to initiate or re-initiate pursuit of the appeal.
- C. Time limits when motion granted. If the motion is granted, all computations of time under the Rules of Supreme Court shall run from the date of the order of the Court of Appeals granting the motion, or if the appellant has been determined to be indigent, from the date of the order by the circuit court appointing counsel to represent the appellant in the delayed appeal, whichever is later.
- D. Applicability. The provisions of this section shall not apply to cases in which the appellant is responsible, in whole or in part, for the error, neglect, or fault causing loss of the original opportunity for appeal, nor shall it apply in cases where the claim of error, neglect, or fault has already been alleged and rejected in a prior judicial proceeding.

the possible right to file a petition for writ of *habeas corpus*, the deadline, or how and where to file the petition for writ of *habeas corpus*.

22. As of August 20, 2024, Mitchell did not know that Respondent had filed his appeal, much less that it was dismissed or the reason it was dismissed. Respondent had not communicated with Mitchell since March 24, 2023, or for over 16 months.
23. By letter dated August 20, 2024, five months after Mitchell's appeal was dismissed and with one month left to file a delayed appeal, and over 16 months after Mitchell's sentencing, Mitchell notified the VSB that Respondent had not responded to Mitchell's attempts to communicate with Respondent to learn whether Respondent had filed his appeal and to obtain his trial transcripts.
24. By letter dated September 11, 2024, Respondent responded to Mitchell with a timeline of the events in Mitchell's appeal, minus the reason for the dismissal of Mitchell's appeal or the CAV's communications with Respondent regarding his failure to correct the Assignments of Error. In this letter, for the first time, Respondent provided Mitchell with his opening brief and the Commonwealth's response. Respondent did not explain to Mitchell why his appeal was dismissed, namely Respondent's failure to correct the Assignments of Error.
25. Respondent did not explain to Mitchell that Mitchell had until September 20, 2024 to pursue a delayed appeal.
26. Respondent did not file a delayed appeal on Mitchell's behalf.
27. By letter dated October 3, 2024, Mitchell apologized to Respondent for filing a bar complaint, explaining that he felt it was the only way to get in touch with Respondent, as

Respondent had failed to respond to Mitchell's attempts to communicate with Respondent.

Michell noted, "This is my life and freedom we're talking about here..."

28. In his letter of October 3, 2024, Mitchell asked Respondent about the Commonwealth's reference to the CAV's email of August 16, 2023 stating that Respondent had 14 days to amend the opening brief so that it complied with the applicable rules and that failure to comply may result in the dismissal of the appeal. Mitchell further noted that the Commonwealth stated in its brief that it had not received an amended pleading and asked Respondent,

So I was wondering was that the reason why they denied it?
And where do I go from here, meaning are you going to file
the next one or do I have to get it done myself?
Please let me know so I can know how to go about it from
here. And I also asked you for a copy of my trial transcripts.
The judge said I get one free copy and I have to get it from
my lawyer (You). So can you please send me a copy of
my TRIAL TRANSCRIPTS PLEASE?

29. Respondent did nothing further on Mitchell's behalf, nor did he communicate with him, or provide him with his trial transcripts.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:

RULE 1.1 Competence

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

RULE 1.3 Diligence

- (a) A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

By failing to:

- (1) file an opening brief which complied with Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part Five A,*
- (2) amend the opening brief so that it complied with the applicable Rules,*
- (3) respond to the Rule to Show Cause, and*
- (4) pursue a motion for delayed appeal on Mitchell's behalf,*

Respondent violated Rules 1.1 and 1.3(a).

RULE 1.4 Communication

(a) A lawyer shall keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.

(b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

By failing to communicate anything to Mitchell with respect to his appeal, including that:

- (1) the appeal was filed,*
- (2) the CAV immediately reached out to Respondent regarding deficiencies with the assignments of error,*
- (3) the Rule to Show Cause,*
- (4) the dismissal of his appeal, including the reason the appeal was dismissed , and*
- (5) Mitchell's options after the dismissal of the appeal including the possibility of a delayed appeal, and a habeas petition,*

Respondent violated Rule 1.4(a) and (b).

RULE 1.16 Declining Or Terminating Representation

(c) In any court proceeding, counsel of record shall not withdraw except by leave of court after compliance with notice requirements pursuant to applicable Rules of Court. In any other matter, a lawyer shall continue representation notwithstanding good cause for terminating the representation, when ordered to do so by a tribunal.

By failing to take any action on Mitchell's behalf after filing the deficient opening brief on August 15, 2023, effectively terminating the representation without seeking to be relieved as counsel in the appeal, and depriving Mitchell of the opportunity for counsel in his appeal who could have filed an amended opening brief and/or pursued a delayed appeal, Respondent violated Rule 1.16(c).

RULE 1.16 Declining Or Terminating Representation

(e) All original, client-furnished documents and any originals of legal instruments or official documents which are in the lawyer's possession (wills, corporate minutes, etc.) are the property of the client and, therefore, upon termination of the representation, those items shall be returned within a reasonable time to the client or the client's new counsel upon request, whether or not the client has paid the fees and costs owed the lawyer. If the lawyer wants to keep a copy of such original documents, the lawyer must incur the cost of duplication. Also upon termination, the client, upon request, must also be provided within a reasonable time copies of the following documents from the lawyer's file, whether or not the client has paid the fees and costs owed the lawyer: lawyer/client and lawyer/third-party communications; the lawyer's copies of client-furnished documents (unless the originals have been returned to the client pursuant to this paragraph); transcripts, pleadings and discovery responses; working and final drafts of legal instruments, official documents, investigative reports, legal memoranda, and other attorney work product documents prepared or collected for the client in the course of the representation; research materials; and bills previously submitted to the client. Although the lawyer may bill and seek to collect from the client the costs associated with making a copy of these materials, the lawyer may not use the client's refusal to pay for such materials as a basis to refuse the

client's request. The lawyer, however, is not required under this Rule to provide the client copies of billing records and documents intended only for internal use, such as memoranda prepared by the lawyer discussing conflicts of interest, staffing considerations, or difficulties arising from the lawyer-client relationship. The lawyer has met his or her obligation under this paragraph by furnishing these items one time at client request upon termination; provision of multiple copies is not required. The lawyer has not met his or her obligation under this paragraph by the mere provision of copies of documents on an item-by-item basis during the course of the representation.

By failing to provide Mitchell with his trial transcripts, despite multiple requests, after Respondent effectively terminated his representation of Mitchell, Respondent violated Rule 1.16(e).

VSB DOCKET NO. 25-032-134148
COMPLAINANT: QUASHAWN J. LESTER

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. In 1997, Respondent was admitted to the VSB. At all relevant times, Respondent was a member of the VSB.
2. Beginning in April 2016, Respondent represented Quashawn J. Lester ("Lester") on seven felonies in Mecklenburg County Circuit Court ("Court"). Respondent represented Lester at his criminal trial beginning August 8, 2017.
3. On August 9, 2017, Lester entered Alford pleas to six of the seven felonies. One felony charge was nolle prossed.
4. By Conviction Order entered October 16, 2017, Lester was convicted of the charges to which he pled.
5. By Sentencing Order entered March 12, 2018, Lester was sentenced to 70 years active incarceration with the Virginia Department of Corrections.

6. After the sentencing hearing, Respondent explained to Lester that he could appeal the sentence.
7. Lester stated that Respondent said that he would get back with Lester to discuss an appeal. Respondent states that he explained to Lester that he was not aware of any appellate issues and that Lester could request a court appointed lawyer to represent him if he thought that he had grounds for appeal. Respondent states that Lester did not express intent to appeal, and Respondent did not agree to pursue an appeal.
8. Although Lester attempted to contact Respondent, Respondent did not communicate with Lester after the March 12, 2018 sentencing hearing.
9. On March 20, 2018, after speaking with Lester's grandmother, Respondent filed a motion to reconsider Lester's sentence. Lester's grandmother paid Respondent \$1,000 to file and pursue the motion to reconsider. Respondent did not prepare a written fee agreement.
10. Lester was unaware that Respondent filed a motion to reconsider and believed that his grandmother paid Respondent \$1,000 to pursue an appeal.
11. Respondent did not set a hearing on the motion to reconsider, and the Court never ruled on the motion to reconsider.
12. Lester learned through the law librarian that Respondent never filed an appeal.
13. On December 11, 2024, Lester submitted a complaint to the VSB that Respondent was compensated \$1,000 to start an appeal, however, Respondent never pursued an appeal nor did Respondent respond to Lester's efforts to find out about the appeal. Lester requested a refund of \$1,000.

14. By letter dated January 9, 2025, Respondent responded to the VSB regarding Lester's complaint. He stated in part, "I filed a Motion to Reconsider the Sentence on March 20, 2018...The court denied that motion."
15. In his interview with the bar investigator, Respondent again stated that the motion to reconsider was denied.
16. Respondent told the bar investigator that he would have told the grandmother, not Lester, that the motion to reconsider was denied.
17. Lester's grandmother stated that although she attempted to find out the status of the matter, she heard nothing further from Respondent after paying him the \$1,000.
18. Respondent did not communicate with Lester about the motion to reconsider.
19. By letter dated April 22, 2025, the bar investigator asked the Clerk of Mecklenburg County Circuit Court for a copy of the order denying Lester's motion to reconsider. By email dated April 24, 2025, the Clerk's Office advised that Respondent never set a hearing on the Motion to Reconsider. The Clerk stated:

In response to your letter dated April 22, 2025, my office received the Motion to Reconsider but the Court never had a hearing on this matter. The attorney sent a copy to the Attorney for the Commonwealth by facsimile but never coordinated a hearing date with their office. In this jurisdiction, their office sets criminal hearing dates based on available dates provided from the judicial assistant. There is no additional communication from the attorney in our file after this motion was filed.

Please let me know if you have any additional questions.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct²:

RULE 1.1 Competence

A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client. Competent representation requires the legal knowledge, skill, thoroughness and preparation reasonably necessary for the representation.

RULE 1.3 Diligence

(a) A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.

By failing to attempt to set a hearing on the motion to reconsider, Respondent violated Rules 1.1 and 1.3(a).

RULE 1.4 Communication

(a) A lawyer shall keep a client reasonably informed about the status of a matter and promptly comply with reasonable requests for information. (b) A lawyer shall explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit the client to make informed decisions regarding the representation.

By failing to communicate with Lester after the sentencing hearing on March 20, 2018, including by failing to inform Lester that he had filed a motion to reconsider but then failed to attempt to set a hearing thereon, Respondent violated Rule 1.4(a).

RULE 1.5 Fees

(a) A lawyer's fee shall be reasonable. The factors to be considered in determining the reasonableness of a fee include the following:

- (1) the time and labor required, the novelty and difficulty of the questions involved, and the skill requisite to perform the legal service properly;
- (2) the likelihood, if apparent to the client, that the acceptance of the particular employment will preclude other employment by the lawyer;

² Italicized language is explanatory and is not intended to limit the findings of the tribunal.

- (3) the fee customarily charged in the locality for similar legal services;
- (4) the amount involved and the results obtained;
- (5) the time limitations imposed by the client or by the circumstances;
- (6) the nature and length of the professional relationship with the client;
- (7) the experience, reputation, and ability of the lawyer or lawyers performing the services; and
- (8) whether the fee is fixed or contingent.

RULE 1.15 Safekeeping Property

(b) Specific Duties. A lawyer shall:

- (4) promptly pay or deliver to the client or another as requested by such person the funds, securities, or other properties in the possession of the lawyer that such person is entitled to receive[.]

RULE 1.16 Declining Or Terminating Representation

(d) Upon termination of representation, a lawyer shall take steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, such as giving reasonable notice to the client, allowing time for employment of other counsel, refunding any advance payment of fee that has not been earned and handling records as indicated in paragraph (e).

RULE 8.4 Misconduct

It is professional misconduct for a lawyer to:

- (b) commit a criminal or deliberately wrongful act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness or fitness to practice law[.]

By failing to return any portion of the \$1,000 fee paid by Lester's grandmother for Respondent to seek reconsideration of the sentence, when Respondent failed to set the motion for hearing or otherwise obtain a ruling on the motion and, therefore, failed to earn the entirety of the \$1,000 fee, Respondent violated Rules 1.5(a), 1.15(b)(4), 1.16(d), and 8.4(b).

III. PROPOSED DISPOSITION

Accordingly, Bar Counsel and Respondent tender to the Three-Judge Panel for its approval the agreed disposition of a One-Year Suspension, which commences on March 3, 2026³ and ends March 3, 2027, as representing an appropriate sanction if this matter were to be heard through an evidentiary hearing by the Three-Judge Panel. The term with which Respondent must comply is as follows:

1. On or before November 1, 2025, Respondent must pay to Arvis White, in certified funds or cashier's or treasurer's check, the sum of \$1,000.00 and submit proof of such payment to Bar Counsel at Virginia State Bar, 1111 East Main Street, Suite 700, Richmond, Virginia 23219. Proof of payment must be submitted on or before November 1, 2025. (Arvis White is not a party to this disciplinary action. Thus, payment in accordance with this disciplinary action does not establish or create civil liability of Respondent to Arvis White, operate to discharge and release the Respondent from claims of further liability, if any, to Ms. White, or impair the right of the Respondent to assert any defenses to such claims.)

Upon satisfactory proof that this term has been met, this matter shall be closed.

If, however, this term, including proof of compliance to Bar Counsel by November 1, 2025, is not met, Respondent agrees that the Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board or, if requested, a Three- Judge Panel shall impose a Three-Year Suspension pursuant to Rules of Court, Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13-18.O.

Bar Counsel, Respondent's counsel, and Respondent agree that, should the Three-Judge Panel reject this Agreed Disposition, that

- 1) the Three-Judge Panel retains jurisdiction to hear this matter, and
- 2) the Three-Judge Panel will treat the Agreed Disposition as a Stipulation of Facts and Misconduct and proceed on the Sanctions phase only.

³ Respondent is currently serving a one-year and one-day Suspension of his license to practice law. The effective date of the one-year and one-day Suspension is March 1, 2025.

If the Agreed Disposition is approved, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs pursuant to ¶ 13-9.E of the Rules.

Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, 4 13-30.B of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Respondent's prior disciplinary record shall be furnished to the Three-Judge Panel.

THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

Renu Brennan

By: _____
Renu M. Brennan
Bar Counsel

Vaughan Christopher Jones

Vaughan Christopher Jones
Respondent

Craig S. Cooley

Craig S. Cooley
Respondent's Counsel