

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR DISCIPLINARY BOARD

IN THE MATTER OF  
WILLIAM SHELDON STANCIL

VSB DOCKET NO. 25-000-134333

**RECIPROCAL MEMORANDUM ORDER**

This matter came to be heard on March 28, 2025, on the Rule to Show Cause and Order of Summary Suspension and Notice of Hearing entered on February 26, 2025 (the "Rule to Show Cause"). The Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board panel (the "Board") consisted of Alison G. M. Martin, Second Vice-Chair, Stephanie G. Cox, Donita M. King, Mary Beth Nash, and Theodore Smith, Lay Member. Jessica Beatty, Assistant Bar Counsel, represented the Virginia State Bar ("VSB"). William Sheldon Stancil (the "Respondent") did not appear. Upon request of the Chair, the Clerk went to the hallway at the appointed time for the hearing, called Respondent three times and reported to the Board that Respondent did not answer. The Chair polled the members of the Board as to whether any of them had any personal or financial interest or bias that would preclude them from fairly hearing this matter and serving on the panel, to which each member responded in the negative. Sandra Thinnies, Court Reporter, 10221 Krause Road, #3, Chesterfield, VA 23832, 804-539-9456, after being duly sworn, reported the hearing and transcribed the proceedings.

All legal notices of the date and place of the hearing were timely sent by the Clerk of the Disciplinary System ("Clerk") in the manner prescribed by the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia (the "*Rules*").

The matter came before the Board on the Rule to Show Cause to which was

appended the District of Columbia Court of Appeals Opinion dated December 19, 2024, ordering that the Respondent be suspended from the practice of law for ninety days in the District of Columbia, with reinstatement conditioned upon a showing of fitness to practice law. The Respondent did not file any response to the Board's Rule to Show Cause.

In accordance with Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-24 of the *Rules*, the purpose of the hearing was to provide the Respondent with an opportunity to show cause, if any, by clear and convincing evidence, why the same or equivalent discipline that was imposed on him by the District of Columbia Court of Appeals should not be imposed by the Board. The findings in the proceedings in the District of Columbia are conclusive of all matters except to the extent that the Respondent proves one or more of the following grounds under Paragraph 13-24.C of the *Rules*:

- 1) The record of the proceeding in the other jurisdiction would clearly show that such proceeding was so lacking in notice or opportunity to be heard as to constitute a denial of due process;
- 2) The imposition by the Board of the same discipline or equivalent discipline upon the same proof would result in an injustice;
- 3) The same conduct would not be grounds for disciplinary action or for the same or equivalent discipline in Virginia; or
- 4) The misconduct found in the other jurisdiction would warrant the imposition of substantially lesser discipline in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

The Board took Judicial Notice of the Rule to Show Cause and Summary Suspension and Notice of Hearing and the attachments thereto, and of the Clerk's notice letter, and received them into evidence as Board Exhibit 1. The Chair, without objection from the Respondent, admitted VSB Exhibits 1-6 into evidence. Respondent was not present and did not proffer any exhibits or other evidence.

The Board, acknowledging that it is the Respondent's burden of proof in this matter, asked Bar counsel to provide a brief analysis of why the factors set forth in Paragraph 13-24 of the *Rules* did not apply to Respondent's case. Further, the Board posed several questions to Bar Counsel regarding the effective date of the proposed sanction and its practical effect.

### **PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND AND FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. The Respondent was licensed to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia on April 21, 1989. His current address of record with the Virginia State Bar is P.O. Box 432012, Los Angeles, CA 90043. His Virginia law license was forfeited pursuant to Section 54.1-3914 of the *Code of Virginia* for failing to pay annual fees for two successive years. (VSB Exhibit 2.)

2. The Respondent received proper notice of this proceeding as required by Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-12 and 13-24 of the *Rules*.

3. Procedurally, Respondent was originally charged with a number of violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct in the District of Columbia arising out of his representation of clients in a child custody matter and a landlord-tenant matter. Disciplinary Counsel for the District ("Disciplinary Counsel") presented evidence and argument regarding violations of Rules 1.1(a) & (b) by failing to provide his clients competent representation; Rule 1.6(a)(1) by knowingly revealing a client confidence or secret; Rule 3.1 (frivolous claim); and Rule 8.4(d) by engaging in conduct that seriously interferes with the administration of justice. At the hearing, DC Disciplinary Counsel conceded they did not have sufficient evidence to establish a violation of Rule 1.6(a)(1) by clear and convincing evidence. The Professional Responsibility Ad Hoc Hearing Committee held a hearing on September 20, 2023. Respondent did not appear for the hearing. The Ad Hoc Committee

made findings of fact and recommendations to the Board on Professional Responsibility that the evidence established that Respondent violated Rules 1.1(a) and (b) (competence, skill, and care), 3.1 (frivolous claim), and 8.4(d) (serious interference with administration of justice), and further, recommended a sanction of a ninety-day suspension, with a requirement to prove fitness prior to reinstatement. (VSB Exhibit 3.) The District of Columbia Court of Appeals Board on Professional Responsibility adopted the recommendations of the Hearing Committee and recommended the same sanction. (VSB Exhibit 4.) By Order entered on December 19, 2024, the District of Columbia Court of Appeals entered an Order to impose the sanction; this Order was provided to Respondent by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel. (VSB Exhibit 5.)

4. Respondent's prior disciplinary record for Virginia was introduced as VSB Exhibit 6, showing no public or private disciplinary Record in Virginia.

5. Paragraph 13-24(C) sets forth the four grounds under which the Board may decline to impose reciprocal discipline or may impose lesser discipline than that which was imposed by the original jurisdiction; one of the grounds must be shown by clear and convincing evidence to allow the Board to decline to impose reciprocal discipline:

1) The record of the proceedings in the District of Columbia would clearly show that such proceeding was so lacking in notice or opportunity to be heard as to constitute a denial of due process;

2) The imposition by the Board of the same or equivalent discipline upon the same proof would result in an injustice;

3) The same conduct would not be grounds for disciplinary action or for the same or equivalent discipline in Virginia; or

4) The misconduct found in the District of Columbia would warrant the imposition of substantially lesser discipline in the Commonwealth of Virginia.

6. In this matter, the Respondent bore the burden to prove by clear and convincing evidence that any of the exceptions enumerated in Paragraph 13-24(C) exist to avoid imposition of reciprocal discipline in Virginia by the Board.

7. At the Board's request, VSB counsel articulated for the Board the evidence in the record from the disciplinary proceedings in the District of Columbia that warrants imposition of a reciprocal sanction in Virginia. As to the notice requirement, VSB counsel noted that the Respondent's conduct demonstrated he had adequate notice of the DC proceedings: he filed an Answer to the proceedings initially, notwithstanding his failure to participate in the hearing. Further, he filed "non-specific objections" to the DC Board's findings. (VSB Exhibit 5.) Finally, the DC's disciplinary process notably involves "many layers of review" from charges to imposition of sanction. From these facts, it is clear that Respondent had notice of the proceedings in DC. As to whether imposition of a reciprocal sanction would result in an injustice, the facts in the record overwhelmingly establish that Respondent failed to provide competent representation to his client in a domestic relations matter by advancing unfounded positions and advising his client to defy a court order. Further, Respondent filed a frivolous lawsuit in a landlord tenant matter. The underlying record in the DC matter supports the findings of the Board of Professional Responsibility and the imposition of a ninety-day sanction. As to the third factor, similar misconduct by Respondent in Virginia would result of the same or equivalent discipline. Virginia has nearly equivalent Rules of Professional Conduct that govern the misconduct of Respondent. Bar Counsel noted the District's Rule 8.4(d) is equivalent to Virginia Rule 8.4(b). Respondent's actions demonstrate a lack of care and lack of attention with regard to his client's best interests. There was no evidence presented that the same misconduct in

Virginia would result in a substantially lesser sanction in Virginia.

**RULING OF THE BOARD**

The Board considered the exhibits introduced and heard arguments of Bar Counsel; and recessed to deliberate and determine whether the Respondent had proven by clear and convincing evidence any grounds set forth in Paragraph 13-24.C for not imposing a reciprocal sanction. After due deliberation, the Board reconvened and found that the Respondent had not proved by clear and convincing evidence any of the factors set forth under Paragraph 13-24.C.

Accordingly, it is ORDERED that the Respondent's license to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia, is suspended for ninety days as of March 28, 2025, with reinstatement conditioned upon Respondent's showing of fitness to practice law as outlined by the District of Columbia Court of Appeals Order of December 19, 2024.

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 must forthwith give notice by certified mail, of the revocation 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 must also make appropriate arrangements for the disposition of matters then in his care in conformity with the wishes of his client. Respondent must give such notice immediately and in no event later than 14 days of the effective date of the revocation, 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 the revocation. The Respondent must also furnish

proof to the Clerk of the Disciplinary System of the Virginia State Bar within 60 days of the effective date of the Revocation or Suspension that such notices have been timely given and such arrangements have been made for the disposition of matters.

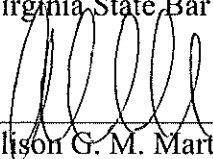
It is further ORDERED that if the Respondent is not handling any client matters on the effective date of revocation, he shall submit an affidavit to that effect to the Clerk of the Disciplinary System at the Virginia State Bar within 60 days of the effective day of the revocation. The Board must decide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

It is further ORDERED that pursuant to Part 6, Section IV, Paragraph 13-9.E of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess all costs against the respondent.

It is further ORDERED that the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall mail an attested copy of this order to the Respondent by electronic, first-class and certified mail, return receipt requested to his address of record with the Virginia State Bar, being P.O. Box 432012, Los Angeles, CA 90043, and a copy by electronic mail to Jessica C. Beatty, Assistant Bar Counsel.

Entered this 1<sup>st</sup> day of April, 2025.

Virginia State Bar Disciplinary Board

  
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Alison G. M. Martin  
Second Vice-Chair