

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE SECOND DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
SHALONDA MICHELLE TILLMAN

VSb Docket No. 22-021-125917

SUBCOMMITTEE DETERMINATION
(PUBLIC ADMONITION WITH TERMS)

On September 14, 2023 and October 5, 2023, meetings were held in this matter before a duly convened Second District, Section I Subcommittee consisting of Jeffrey Gray, Chair; Jonathan Gallo, Member, and Zoah Scheneman, Lay Member. During the October 5, 2023 meeting, the Subcommittee voted to approve an Agreed Disposition for a Public Admonition with Terms pursuant to Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.B.4 of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. The Agreed Disposition was entered into by the Virginia State Bar, by Assistant Bar Counsel Tenley Carroll Seli, and Shalonda Michelle Tillman ("Respondent"), *pro se*.

WHEREFORE, the Second District, Section I Subcommittee of the Virginia State Bar hereby serves upon Respondent the following Public Admonition with Terms:

I. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2021, and was, at all relevant times, active and in good standing. Respondent is also licensed to practice law in the District of Columbia.
2. Respondent is a sole practitioner who maintains offices in Norfolk, Virginia and the District of Columbia.
3. On or about December 2, 2021, Sunny Ihazah ("Complainant") hired Respondent to represent him in a child custody and visitation matter pending in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Family Division, Domestic Relations Branch.

4. Respondent and Complainant executed a Representation Agreement (“Agreement”). Respondent and Complainant agreed to an hourly rate of \$275 with \$2,500 paid in advance. On December 2, 2021, Complainant electronically signed the Agreement.
5. Complainant paid Respondent the advance legal fees in the amount of \$2,500 in installments. Respondent produced documentation that Complainant made payments on December 1, 2021 (\$750), December 9, 2021 (\$500), December 26, 2021 (\$350), February 14, 2022 (\$400), February 23, 2022 (\$250) and March 22, 2022 (\$250).
6. Respondent began work on Complainant’s case in December 2021.
7. Respondent did not deposit any of the unearned \$2,500 fee into a trust account at any time.
8. Respondent maintained a DC IOLTA account at PNC bank. From December 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022, the DC IOLTA had a zero balance.
9. In May 2022, Complainant became dissatisfied with Respondent’s legal services. On May 13, 2022, Complainant sought a refund of \$2,500 from Respondent.
10. On May 31, 2022, Complainant filed a complaint with the Virginia State Bar (“VSB”) in which he, among other complaints, sought a refund of \$2,500 from Respondent.
11. On June 22, 2022, Respondent provided Complainant with an invoice reflecting legal services exceeding \$2,500. Respondent provided the VSB with documentation which supported the description of legal work contained in the invoice.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct:¹

¹ Pursuant to the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 8.5(b), the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct apply to Respondent’s misconduct.

Rule 8.5 Disciplinary Authority; Choice of Law

(b) Choice of Law. In any exercise of the disciplinary authority of Virginia, the rules of professional conduct to be applied shall be as follows:

- (1) For conduct in connection with a proceeding in a court, agency, or other tribunal before which a lawyer appears, the rules to be applied shall be the rules of the jurisdiction in which the court, agency or other tribunal sits, unless the rules of the court, agency, or other tribunal provide otherwise[.]

For failing to deposit unearned fees into a trust account, Respondent violated District of Columbia Rule 1.15(a).²

District of Columbia Rule 1.15 Safekeeping Property

- (a) A lawyer shall hold property of clients or third persons that is in the lawyer's possession in connection with a representation separate from the lawyer's own property. Funds of clients or third persons that are in the lawyer's possession (trust funds) shall be kept in one or more trust accounts maintained in accordance with paragraph (b).³ Other property shall be identified as such and appropriately safeguarded. Complete records of such account funds and other property shall be kept by the lawyer and shall be preserved for a period of five years after termination of the representation.

III. PUBLIC ADMONITION WITH TERMS

Accordingly, it is the decision of the Subcommittee to impose a Public Admonition with

Terms. The terms shall be met as set forth below and are as follows:

1. Respondent will read in its entirety *Lawyers and Other People's Money, 5th Edition* and Legal Ethics Opinion 1606. Respondent must immediately certify compliance in writing to Assistant Bar Counsel Tenley Carroll Seli within 30 days of the date of approval of this Agreed Disposition by the District Committee.
2. Respondent will complete four hours of continuing legal education by attended courses approved by the Virginia State Bar in the subject matter of trust accounting and law office management. Respondent's Continuing Legal Education attendance obligation set forth in this paragraph will not be applied toward her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education ("MCLE") requirement in Virginia or any other jurisdictions in which Respondent may be licensed to practice law. Respondent will certify her compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance form (Form 2) to Assistant Bar Counsel Tenley Carroll Seli on or before May 1, 2024.
3. For a period of one year following entry of the Subcommittee Determination, Respondent agrees to and will submit to unannounced reviews by a VSB investigator of her trust

² Italicized language is explanatory.

³ District of Columbia Rule 1.15(b) states, in pertinent part, that all trust funds shall be deposited with an "approved depository" as that term is defined in Rule XI of the Rules Governing the District of Columbia Bar. Rule XI, § 20 requires a financial institution to file an undertaking with the Board on Professional Responsibility agreeing (i) to report to Disciplinary Counsel overdrafts or other irregularities in trust accounts and to respond to subpoenas from Disciplinary Counsel and (ii) for financial institutions that elect to offer IOLTA trust accounts, to pay interest and charge fees on IOLTA accounts that are comparable to non-IOLTA accounts and to submit the interest and periodic reports to the District of Columbia Bar Foundation, which administers the IOLTA program.

account books, records and bank records to ensure her compliance with all of the provisions of Rule 1.15 of the Rules of Professional Conduct. Respondent agrees to and will fully cooperate with the VSB investigator in submitting to such reviews and making available bank records, cancelled checks, checkbooks, subsidiary ledgers, receipts journals, disbursements journals, evidence of reconciliations, and any and all other documents necessary for the completion of the reviews.

If any of the terms are not met by the time specified herein, the District Committee shall certify this matter for a sanctions determination pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.G of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. Any proceeding initiated due to failure to comply with terms will be considered a new matter and an administrative fee and costs will be assessed.

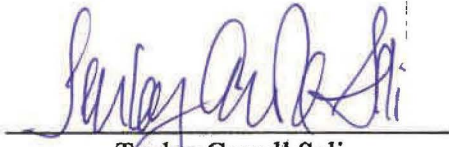
Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-9.E. of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

SECOND DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

By: 
Jeffrey Gray
Subcommittee Chair

CERTIFICATE OF MAILING

I certify that on October 12, 2023 a true and complete copy of the Subcommittee Determination (Public Admonition With Terms) was sent to Shalonda M. Tillman, Respondent, by email at stillman@goansonlaw.com and by certified mail at Anson Law PLLC, 900 Granby Street, Suite 205, Norfolk, Virginia 23501, Respondent's last address of record with the Virginia State Bar.



Tenley Carroll Seli
Assistant Bar Counsel

VIRGINIA:

BEFORE THE SECOND DISTRICT, SECTION I SUBCOMMITTEE
OF THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR

IN THE MATTER OF
SHALONDA MICHELLE TILLMAN

VS. Docket No. 22-021-125917

**AGREED DISPOSITION
(PUBLIC ADMONITION WITH TERMS)**

Pursuant to the Rules of Supreme Court of Virginia, Part Six, Section IV, Paragraph 13-15.B.4, the Virginia State Bar, by Tenley Carroll Seli, Assistant Bar Counsel, and Shalonda Michelle Tillman, Respondent *pro se*, enter into the following Agreed Disposition arising out of this matter.

I. STIPULATIONS OF FACT

1. Shalonda Michelle Tillman ("Respondent") was admitted to practice law in the Commonwealth of Virginia in 2021, and was, at all relevant times, active and in good standing. Respondent is also licensed to practice law in the District of Columbia.
2. Respondent is a sole practitioner who maintains offices in Norfolk, Virginia and the District of Columbia.
3. On or about December 2, 2021, Sunny Ihazah ("Complainant") hired Respondent to represent him in a child custody and visitation matter pending in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Family Division, Domestic Relations Branch.
4. Respondent and Complainant executed a Representation Agreement ("Agreement"). Respondent and Complainant agreed to an hourly rate of \$275 with \$2,500 paid in advance. On December 2, 2021, Complainant electronically signed the Agreement.
5. Complainant paid Respondent the advance legal fees in the amount of \$2,500 in installments. Respondent produced documentation that Complainant made payments on December 1, 2021 (\$750), December 9, 2021 (\$500), December 26, 2021 (\$350), February 14, 2022 (\$400), February 23, 2022 (\$250) and March 22, 2022 (\$250).
6. Respondent began work on Complainant's case in December 2021.
7. Respondent did not deposit any of the unearned \$2,500 fee into a trust account at any time.

8. Respondent maintained a DC IOLTA account at PNC Bank. From December 1, 2021 through May 31, 2022, the DC IOLTA had a zero balance.
9. In May 2022, Complainant became dissatisfied with Respondent's legal services. On May 13, 2022, Complainant sought a refund of \$2,500 from Respondent.
10. On May 31, 2022, Complainant filed a complaint with the Virginia State Bar ("VSB") in which he, among other complaints, sought a refund of \$2,500 from Respondent.
11. On June 22, 2022, Respondent provided Complainant with an invoice reflecting legal services exceeding \$2,500. Respondent provided the VSB with documentation which supported the description of legal work contained in the invoice.

II. NATURE OF MISCONDUCT

Such conduct by Respondent constitutes misconduct in violation of the following provisions of the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct:¹

For failing to deposit unearned fees into a trust account, Respondent violated District of Columbia Rule 1.15(a).²

District of Columbia Rule 1.15 Safekeeping Property

- (a) A lawyer shall hold property of clients or third persons that is in the lawyer's possession in connection with a representation separate from the lawyer's own property. Funds of clients or third persons that are in the lawyer's possession (trust funds) shall be kept in one or more trust accounts maintained in accordance with paragraph (b)³. Other property shall be

¹ Pursuant to the Virginia Rules of Professional Conduct, Rule 8.5(b), the District of Columbia Rules of Professional Conduct apply to Respondent's misconduct.

Rule 8.5 Disciplinary Authority; Choice of Law

- (b) Choice of Law. In any exercise of the disciplinary authority of Virginia, the rules of professional conduct to be applied shall be as follows:

- (1) For conduct in connection with a proceeding in a court, agency, or other tribunal before which a lawyer appears, the rules to be applied shall be the rules of the jurisdiction in which the court, agency, or other tribunal sits, unless the rules of the court, agency, or other tribunal provide otherwise[.]

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

³ District of Columbia Rule 1.15(b) states, in relevant part, that all trust funds shall be deposited with an "approved depository" as that term is defined in Rule XI of the Rules Governing the District of Columbia Bar. Rule XI, § 20 requires a financial institution to file an undertaking with the Board on Professional Responsibility agreeing (i) to report to Disciplinary Counsel overdrafts or other irregularities in trust accounts and to respond to subpoenas from Disciplinary Counsel and (ii) for financial institutions that elect to offer IOLTA trust accounts, to pay interest and charge fees on IOLTA accounts that are comparable to non-IOLTA

identified as such and appropriately safeguarded. Complete records of such account funds and other property shall be kept by the lawyer and shall be preserved for a period of five years after termination of the representation.

III. PROPOSED DISPOSITION

Accordingly, Assistant Bar Counsel Tenley Carroll Seli and Respondent tender to the Subcommittee of the Second District, Section I Committee for its approval the Agreed Disposition of a Public Admonition with Terms as representing an appropriate sanction if this matter were to be heard through an evidentiary hearing by the Second District, Section I Committee. The terms shall be met as set forth below and are as follows:

1. Respondent will read in its entirety *Lawyers and Other People's Money, 5th Edition* and Legal Ethics Opinion 1606. Respondent must immediately certify compliance in writing to Assistant Bar Counsel Tenley Carroll Seli within 30 days of the date of approval of this Agreed Disposition by the District Subcommittee.
2. Respondent will complete four hours of continuing legal education by attending courses approved by the Virginia State Bar in the subject matter of trust accounting and law office management. Respondent's Continuing Legal Education attendance obligation set forth in this paragraph will not be applied toward her Mandatory Continuing Legal Education ("MCLE") requirement in Virginia or any other jurisdictions in which Respondent may be licensed to practice law. Respondent will certify her compliance with the terms set forth in this paragraph by delivering a fully and properly executed Virginia MCLE Board Certification of Attendance form (Form 2) to Assistant Bar Counsel Tenley Carroll Seli promptly following her attendance of each such CLE program on or before May 1, 2024.
3. For a period of one year following the entry of this Subcommittee Determination, Respondent hereby agrees to and will submit to unannounced reviews by a VSB investigator of her trust account books, records, and bank records to ensure her compliance with all of the provisions of Rule 1.15 of the Rules of Professional Conduct. Respondent agrees to and will fully cooperate with the VSB investigator in submitting to such reviews and making available bank records, cancelled checks, checkbooks, subsidiary ledgers, receipts journals, disbursements journals, evidence of reconciliations, and any and all other documents necessary for the completion of the reviews.

If any of the terms are not met by the deadlines established herein, Respondent agrees that the District Committee shall certify this matter for a sanctions determination pursuant to Part

accounts and to submit the interest and periodic reports to the D.C. Bar Foundation, which administers the IOLTA program.

6, § IV, ¶ 13-15.G of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia. Any proceeding initiated due to failure to comply with terms will be considered a new matter, and an administrative fee and costs will be assessed pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-9.E of the Rules of the Supreme Court of Virginia.

If the agreed disposition is approved, the Clerk of the Disciplinary System shall assess costs.

Pursuant to Part 6, § IV, ¶ 13-30.B of the Rules of Supreme Court of Virginia, Respondent's prior disciplinary record shall be furnished to the subcommittee considering this agreed disposition.

THE VIRGINIA STATE BAR



Tenley Carroll Seli
Assistant Bar Counsel

Shalonda Michelle Tillman
Respondent *pro se*