

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF ILLINOIS

In the Matter of:

BLAKE ERIN STONE,

Attorney-Movant,

No. 6238173.

Supreme Court No. M.R.

Commission No. 2022PR00075

MOTION PURSUANT TO SUPREME COURT RULE 762(a)

Blake Erin Stone respectfully represents to the Court that:

1. On November 7, 1996, Movant was licensed by this Court to practice law in Illinois.
2. Movant desires to have his name stricken from the Roll of Attorneys pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 762(a), effective immediately.
3. Filed contemporaneously with this motion are a statement of charges prepared by the Administrator and Movant's affidavit in support of this motion.

WHEREFORE, Movant respectfully requests that the Court enter an order striking his name from the Roll of Attorneys.

Blake Stone

Blake Erin Stone

Blake Erin Stone
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CYNTHIA A. GRANT
SUPREME COURT CLERK

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September 8, 2022

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STATEMENT OF CHARGES PURSUANT TO
SUPREME COURT RULE 762(a)

Jerome Larkin, Administrator of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, by his attorney, Christine P. Anderson, pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 762(a), states that on the date Blake Erin Stone (hereinafter “Movant”) filed a motion requesting that his name be stricken from the Roll of Attorneys, the Administrator was investigating allegations that Movant neglected six client matters, made misrepresentations to clients, a court and the Administrator and failed to refund approximately \$16,000.00 in unearned fees. Had Movant’s conduct been the subject of a hearing, the Administrator would have introduced the evidence described below, and that evidence would have clearly and convincingly established the misconduct set forth below:

I. FACTUAL BASIS

Movant’s admissions and testimony, court files and other documents, and the testimony of various other individuals would establish the following facts:

A. *Movant’s Background*

1. Movant is 51 years old and was licensed to practice law in Illinois on November 7, 1996. He is currently registered for 2022. During the events described herein, Movant was a solo practitioner in Joliet. He is currently employed by the United States Department of Defense in a civilian position.

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B. *Lack of Diligence, Misrepresentations and Failure to Refund Unearned fees - Jeanina Thomas*

2. In May 2019, Movant agreed to represent Jeanina Thomas for a \$1,500.00 flat fee in her dispute with a car dealership. Thereafter, Movant never filed a claim on behalf of Ms. Thomas against the car dealership.

3. In February of 2020, Movant falsely advised Thomas that he had settled her claim against the car dealership for \$15,600.00 and provided her with a purported release to sign. At no time did Movant obtain a settlement with the car dealership, nor did the dealership provide Movant with a release for Ms. Thomas. Movant falsely created the release that he tendered to Thomas.

4. On March 31, 2022, Movant provided correspondence to the Administrator in response to the request for investigation filed against him by Thomas. In that correspondence, Movant admitted that he neglected Thomas's matter and falsely advised the Administrator that he was currently unable to practice law due to an undisclosed medical condition. Movant knew that his statement to the Administrator, concerning the purported medical condition was false, because at no time was Movant unable to practice law due to a medical condition. In that correspondence, Movant also stated that he would completely refund the \$1,500.00 fee Thomas paid to him.

5. As of the filing of his motion to strike his name from the Roll of Attorneys, Movant had not refunded any portion of the \$1,500.00 fee paid to him by Thomas. The services Movant provided Thomas do not justify his continued retention of those fees.

C. *Lack of Diligence, Misrepresentations and Failure to Refund Unearned Fees – Aubry Watson*

6. In March 2018, Movant agreed to represent Aubry Watson in the defense of various criminal matters pending against Watson in Will County, for a flat fee of \$6,000.00. Between

2018 to 2022, Movant failed to appear at various scheduled court dates in Watson's criminal matters.

7. In February 2022, Movant falsely advised Watson that he had been diagnosed with stage three pancreatic cancer and thereafter Movant filed a motion to withdraw from Watson's criminal cases. In his motion to withdraw, Movant falsely advised the court that he was suffering from "a medical condition that prohibits me from continuing to practice law." Movant knew that his statements to Watson and the court were false, because at no time was Movant diagnosed with pancreatic cancer or any other medical condition that would prevent him from practicing law. Based on his false representations, the trial court allowed Movant to withdraw from Watson's matters and appointed the Will County Public Defender to represent Watson.

8. On April 12, 2022, Movant provided correspondence to the Administrator in response to the request for investigation filed against him by Watson. In that correspondence, Movant falsely advised the Administrator that he had recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. Movant also stated that he would turn over Watson's file to the Will County Public Defender and would discuss a fee refund with his client.

9. As of the filing of his motion to strike his name from the Roll of Attorneys, Movant had not refunded any portion of the \$6,000.00 fee paid to him by Watson, nor has he turned over Watson's file to the Will County Public Defender. The services Movant provided to Watson do not justify his continued retention of those fees.

D. *Lack of Diligence, Misrepresentations and Failure to Refund Unearned Fees - Richard Goodwin*

10. In November 2021, Movant agreed to represent Richard Goodwin in a felony criminal matter in DuPage County. Goodwin paid Movant \$4,500.00 of the initial \$10,000.00 flat fee quoted by Movant. In December 2021, Movant falsely advised Goodwin that he had filed a

substitute appearance and a motion to suppress evidence in Goodwin's case. In fact, Movant never filed an appearance or motion in Goodwin's case.

11. In February 2022, Movant falsely advised Goodwin that he had been diagnosed with stage three pancreatic cancer and that, as a result, he was unable to practice law and would refund Goodwin's \$4,500.00 fee. Movant's statements to Goodwin, were false, because at no time was Movant diagnosed with pancreatic cancer or any other medical condition that would prevent him from practicing law.

12. On April 21, 2022, Movant provided correspondence to the Administrator in response to the request for investigation filed against him by Goodwin. In that correspondence, Movant falsely advised the Administrator that he had recently been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. In that correspondence, Movant also stated that he would refund the entire \$4,500.00 paid to him by Goodwin.

13. As of the filing of his motion to strike his name from the Roll of Attorneys, Movant had not refunded any portion of the \$4,500.00 fee paid to him by Goodwin. The services Movant provided Goodwin do not justify his continued retention of those fees.

E. *Lack of Diligence and Failure to Refund Unearned Fees - Intisar Matarieh*

14. In January 2019, Movant agreed to represent Intisar Matarieh in an uncontested dissolution of marriage proceeding in Cook County. Matarieh paid Movant a flat fee of \$2,800.00. Movant prepared and filed the petition for dissolution of marriage but never completed the prove-up of the matter.

15. On April 21, 2022, Movant provided correspondence to the Administrator in response to the request for investigation filed against him by Goodwin. In that correspondence, Movant stated that he would refund the entire \$2,800.00 paid to him by Matarieh.

16. As of the filing of his motion to strike his name from the Roll of Attorneys, Movant had not refunded any portion of the \$2,800.00 fee paid to him by Matarieh. The services Movant provided Matarieh do not justify his continued retention of those fees.

F. *Lack of Diligence and Failure to Refund Unearned Fees - Eleni Triantou*

17. In April 2019, Movant agreed to represent Eleni Triantou in defense of a collection matter in Will County. Triantou paid Movant a flat fee of \$1,500.00. Movant entered an appearance as counsel for Triantou in June 2020, but sometime thereafter stopped participating in the case. In February 2022, after Movant failed to appear at numerous court appearances, a default judgment was entered against Triantou for \$11,269.11. At no time did Movant advise Triantou about the judgment.

18. As of the filing of his motion to strike his name from the Roll of Attorneys, Movant had not refunded any portion of the \$1,500.00 fee paid to him by Triantou. The services Movant provided Triantou do not justify his continued retention of those fees.

G. *Lack of Diligence - Michael Secreto*

19. In March 2020, Movant agreed to represent Michael Secreto in an arbitration matter in Will County, related to Secreto's default on the purchase of a semi-tractor. Secreto paid Movant a flat fee of \$400.00. On or about November 19, 2020, after Movant advised Secreto that he would continue the arbitration date, he failed to appear and a default judgment was entered against Secreto for \$27,493.77. At no time did Movant advise Secreto about the judgment.

II. CONCLUSIONS OF MISCONDUCT

20. By reason of the conduct described above, Movant has engaged in the following misconduct:

- a. failing to act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client, by conduct including failing to file a claim on behalf of Jeanina Thomas, failing to appear for scheduled criminal court appearances for Aubry Watson, failing to file an appearance or motion to suppress in Richard Goodwin's criminal case, failing to complete the prove-up in Intisar Matarieh's dissolution of marriage case, and failing to appear for scheduled arbitration conferences in Eleni Triantou and Michael Secreto's arbitration cases, thereby resulting in judgments being entered against them in those cases, in violation of Rule 1.3 of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct(2010);
- b. failure upon termination of representation, to take steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, by refunding any advance payment of fee or expense that has not been earned or incurred, by failing to return unearned fees to Thomas, Watson, Goodwin, Matarieh and Triantou, in violation of Rule 1.16(d) of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct (2010);
- c. failure upon termination of representation, to take steps to the extent reasonably practicable to protect a client's interests, by conduct including failure to cooperate and turn over documents to Watson's new attorney, the Will County Public Defender, in violation of Rule 1.16(d) of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct;
- d. conduct involving dishonesty, deceit, fraud, or misrepresentation, by conduct including but not limited to Respondent's statements to Jeanina Thomas when he falsely advised her that he had settled her claim against the car dealership for \$15,600.00 and provided her with a release he falsely created, by falsely advising Aubry Watson that he had been diagnosed with stage three pancreatic cancer and falsely advising the court and the Administrator that he was suffering from a medical condition that prevented him from continuing to practice law, by falsely advising Richard Goodwin that he had filed a substitute appearance and a motion to suppress evidence in his case and further advising Goodwin that he had been diagnosed with stage three

pancreatic cancer, in violation of Rule 8.4(c) of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct (2010); and

- e. knowingly making a false statement of material fact in connection with a lawyer disciplinary matter, by falsely advising the Administrator in various responses to requests for investigation that he had been diagnosed with an undisclosed medical condition and pancreatic cancer, in violation of Rule 8.1(a) of the Illinois Rules of Professional Conduct (2010).

Respectfully submitted,

Jerome Larkin, Administrator
Attorney Registration and
Disciplinary Commission

By: /s/ Christine P. Anderson
Christine P. Anderson

Christine P. Anderson
Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission
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AFFIDAVIT

Affiant, Blake Erin Stone, being first duly sworn, states:

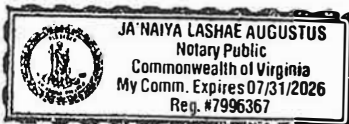
1. Affiant has filed with this Court a motion to strike his name from the Roll of Attorneys licensed to practice law in Illinois, pursuant to Rule 762(a).
2. Affiant has received and reviewed a copy of the Administrator's statement of charges that are pending against him. If the matter proceeded to hearing, the Administrator would present the evidence described in the statement of charges, and that evidence would clearly and convincingly establish the facts and conclusions of misconduct set forth in the statement of charges.
3. Affiant's motion is freely and voluntarily made.
4. Affiant understands the nature and consequences of the motion.

Blake Erin Stone

Subscribed and sworn to before me
this 6 day of ~~August~~, 2022. ^{September} JA

NOTARY PUBLIC

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NOTICE OF FILING

TO: Blake Erin Stone
Movant
PO Box 1812
Fort Myer, Virginia 22211
blake.e.stone@gmail.com

PLEASE TAKE NOTICE that on September 8, 2022, electronic copies of Movant's MOTION PURSUANT TO SUPREME COURT RULE 762(a), Administrator's STATEMENT OF CHARGES PURSUANT TO SUPREME COURT RULE 762(a) and Movant's AFFIDAVIT, were submitted to the Clerk of the Supreme Court for filing. On that same date, a copy was served on Movant, by email at blake.e.stone@gmail.com at or before 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jerome Larkin, Administrator
Attorney Registration and
Disciplinary Commission

By: /s/ Christine P. Anderson
Christine P. Anderson

Christine P. Anderson
Counsel for the Administrator
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PROOF OF SERVICE

The undersigned, an attorney, hereby certifies, pursuant to the Illinois Code of Civil Procedure, 735 ILCS 5/109, that the Administrator served copies of the Notice of Filing, Movant's MOTION PURSUANT TO SUPREME COURT RULE 762(a), Administrator's STATEMENT OF CHARGES PURSUANT TO SUPREME COURT RULE 762(a) and Movant's AFFIDAVIT, on the individual at the address shown on the forgoing Notice of Filing, by email at blake.e.stone@gmail.com on September 8, 2022 at or before 4:00 p.m.

Under penalties as provided by law pursuant to Section 1-109 of the Code of Civil Procedure, the undersigned certifies that the statements set forth in this instrument are true and correct, except as to matters therein stated to be on information and belief and as to such matters the undersigned certifies as aforesaid that she verily believes the same to be true.

/s/ Christine P. Anderson
Christine P. Anderson

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