

In re Jinhee Kim Wilde
Attorney-Respondent

Supreme Court No. M.R. 032220
Commission No. 2024PR00020

Synopsis of Hearing Board Report and Recommendation
(February 2026)

Respondent was disbarred in the District of Columbia for misconduct including theft of \$1,100 during a flight to South Korea and submitting multiple forged and fabricated documents and giving false testimony to South Korean courts during her criminal proceeding. The Administrator filed a petition for reciprocal discipline based on the disbarment. Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 763(d), Respondent requested to be heard on whether she was deprived of due process of law in the District of Columbia proceeding; whether the investigative process in the District of Columbia was comparable to the investigative process that would have been conducted in Illinois, and whether her conduct warrants substantially less discipline in Illinois. The court granted Respondent's request to be heard and referred the matter to the Hearing Board. Following a hearing, the Hearing Panel determined that Respondent was not deprived of due process, the District of Columbia investigative process was comparable to the investigative process in Illinois, and Respondent did not establish that her misconduct warrants substantially less discipline in Illinois. The Hearing Panel found that Respondent gave false testimony in this proceeding. Based on Respondent's extensive misconduct involving dishonesty, her false testimony in this proceeding, and the absence of evidence that would justify a lesser sanction, the Hearing Panel recommended that reciprocal discipline of disbarment be imposed.

**BEFORE THE HEARING BOARD
OF THE
ILLINOIS ATTORNEY REGISTRATION
AND
DISCIPLINARY COMMISSION**

In the Matter of:

JINHEE KIM WILDE,

Attorney-Respondent,

No. 6191712.

Supreme Court No. 032220

Commission No. 2024PR00020

REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION OF HEARING BOARD

SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

The Administrator filed a petition for reciprocal discipline following Respondent's disbarment in the District of Columbia. The court granted Respondent's request under Supreme Court Rule 763(d) for a hearing on the issues of whether (1) she was deprived of due process in the District of Columbia proceeding; (2) the District of Columbia investigative process was not comparable to the investigative process that would have been conducted in Illinois; and (3) her conduct warrants substantially less discipline in Illinois. After an evidentiary hearing, the Hearing Panel found that Respondent was not deprived of due process, the District of Columbia investigative process was comparable to the investigative process in Illinois, and Respondent's misconduct warrants an equally serious sanction in Illinois. Consequently, the Hearing Panel recommended that reciprocal discipline of disbarment be imposed.

INTRODUCTION

The hearing in this matter was held on September 30, 2025, at the Chicago office of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission, before a hearing panel consisting of Stephen

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February 20, 2026

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S. Mitchell, Scott M. Hoster, and Brian B. Duff. Richard C. Gleason, II, appeared on behalf of the Administrator. Respondent was present and was represented by James A. Doppke.

PLEADINGS

The Administrator filed her Petition for Reciprocal Discipline on April 12, 2024. On May 1, 2024, Respondent filed Respondent's Request for Hearing in Response to the Administrator's Petition for Reciprocal Discipline Pursuant to Supreme Court Rule 763. The Administrator filed a reply, and Respondent was granted leave to supplement her request for a hearing. On September 20, 2024, the court granted Respondent's request for a hearing and referred the matter to the Hearing Board for a hearing.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

This matter has a lengthy and complex procedural history that is summarized below and set forth fully in the District of Columbia Hearing Committee and Board of Professional Responsibility reports (Adm. Ex. 1 at 309, 1468) and Court of Appeals decision, In re Jinhee K. Wilde, No. 19-BG-0702 (Aug. 17, 2023). On August 28, 2009, Respondent was convicted of theft in the Incheon District Court in Incheon, South Korea, for stealing \$1,100 from another passenger during a May 27, 2007 flight from Washington D.C. to Seoul, South Korea. Initially, Respondent was charged and convicted *in absentia*. After learning of the conviction, she hired counsel and was granted a new trial. During her criminal proceedings, Respondent submitted several documents purportedly authored and signed by employees of Commerce Bank in an effort to demonstrate that she withdrew the cash she was accused of stealing before the flight, and it belonged to her. Following a trial in which Respondent had counsel, testified, and had the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses and present evidence in her defense, she was convicted. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 2098-

2100). She appealed the conviction and was represented by counsel throughout the appeal. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 2262).

While Respondent's criminal appeal was pending in South Korea, the Maryland Attorney Grievance Commission charged her with violating Maryland rules of professional conduct 3.3, 3.4, 8.1, and 8.4, by committing theft and submitting five falsified documents to the South Korean court. A two-day disciplinary hearing was held before Circuit Court Judge Ronald B. Rubin. On March 30, 2011, Judge Rubin issued a memorandum opinion finding that Maryland disciplinary counsel failed to prove that Respondent committed theft or forged or falsified any documents. Judge Rubin found Respondent's denials of the misconduct credible and found the victim, Erica Yoon (referred to as Erica Chang in the Maryland decision), and the bank employees who denied creating the documents at issue not credible. Yoon's testimony was taken via telephone deposition prior to the hearing, without a translator. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 653; Resp. Ex. 5 at 83). Yoon was not a native English speaker. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 322, footnote 6).

The Incheon District Court of Criminal Appeals upheld Respondent's conviction on September 6, 2011. Both the Incheon trial court and appellate court questioned the authenticity of the bank documents Respondent submitted in her defense. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 2100, 2266). In addition, the appellate court rejected Respondent's argument that it should reverse the conviction based on the Maryland court's findings, noting deficiencies in the evidence before the Maryland court. Respondent's sentence consisted of a fine of 500,000 won (approximately \$350 U.S. dollars). (Adm. Ex. 1 at 2262-2269).

In 2015¹, the District of Columbia (D.C.) Office of Disciplinary Counsel charged Respondent with the following²:

Knowingly making a false statement of fact to a tribunal by providing false testimony to the South Korean court as to the authenticity of the purported Commerce Bank documents that she had fabricated;

Offering evidence she knew to be false by submitting fabricated Commerce Bank documents to the South Korean court;

Falsifying evidence by submitting as evidence in her criminal proceeding forged letters from bank employees and a forged check;

Knowingly making a false statement of fact in connection with a disciplinary matter by making false statements to D.C. disciplinary counsel about the authenticity of the evidence she submitted in her criminal proceeding;

Committing a criminal act that reflects adversely on her fitness as a lawyer by committing theft, fraud, and forgery in violation of the laws of South Korea or the District of Columbia;

Engaging in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit or misrepresentation by submitting false testimony and forged documents to South Korean authorities; and

Engaging in conduct that seriously interferes with the administration of justice by tainting the South Korean judicial process with false statements and documents.

(D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct 3.3(a)(1), 3.3(a)(4), 3.4(b), 8.1(a) and (b), 8.4(b), 8.4(c), and 8.4(d)). A seven-day hearing was held before a D.C. Hearing Committee between May 11, 2015 and May 4, 2016, in which twenty witnesses testified. Respondent was represented by counsel throughout the D.C. proceedings. She testified in her hearing, presented evidence in her defense, and had the opportunity to cross-examine witnesses. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 309-13).

On June 4, 2018, the Hearing Committee issued a report and recommendation containing detailed factual findings (Adm. Ex. 1 at 309-68), which the Board of Professional Responsibility and Court of Appeals found were supported by substantial evidence. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 1478; In re Wilde, No. 19-BG-0702 at 25-28). We summarize those findings here to provide context for our analysis of the issues before us.

Factual Findings in the District of Columbia

On May 27, 2007, Respondent flew from Washington D.C. to Seoul, South Korea, for business purposes. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 322). At the time, she was a partner in the Washington D.C. law firm Teras & Wilde, with a practice in immigration law. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 318). During the flight, a flight attendant observed Respondent going through the purse of another passenger, Erica Yoon (also referred to as Erica Chang in some exhibits), while Yoon was sleeping. When the flight attendant asked Yoon to check her purse, Yoon discovered that \$1,100 in \$100 bills was missing and some bills were sticking out of her wallet. The senior flight attendant informed Respondent that Yoon was missing money and a witness had seen Respondent going through Yoon's purse. Respondent denied taking Yoon's purse or money. The flight purser then examined the remaining bills in Yoon's wallet and the bills in Respondent's possession and noted that the serial numbers for some of the bills in Respondent's possession were sequential to those in Yoon's wallet. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 323-24). When the flight landed, South Korean police interviewed Respondent and Yoon, and Respondent provided a signed sworn statement. The police photocopied the bills at issue and listed each serial number on a seizure report. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 325-26).

Two days after the police questioned her, Respondent provided the police with a written supplemental statement in which she maintained that she obtained \$2,000 in cash before her flight, \$1,000 of which she withdrew from her law firm account at Commerce Bank, and another \$1,000 that she obtained from a personal account for personal use. Respondent included with the supplemental statement a copy of the check for the \$1,000 withdrawal from Commerce Bank and a letter from Respondent to her personal bank listing three withdrawals and asking the bank to confirm them. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 327).

During the Maryland disciplinary proceedings, Respondent produced an undated faxed document on blank paper listing the serial numbers of the \$100 bills she claimed she withdrew from Commerce Bank. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 328, 333). She testified in the D.C. proceeding that the list was created before her flight because her intuition led her believe she would need it. According to Respondent, she took her \$100 bills back to Commerce Bank and had bank employee Brian Vinson prepare the list of serial numbers. Respondent claimed she left the list on her desk in Washington D.C. and had her law firm bookkeeper fax it to her after she was questioned by the South Korean police. However, Respondent did not provide the list to the police or inform them that she had such a list. Respondent never produced the original list. Respondent admitted that neither the South Korean police, the South Korean court, nor her South Korean or U.S. attorneys had the original list or fax. Moreover, the list included a serial number of a bill that was still in Yoon's possession when the flight crew inventoried the bills and did not include the serial number of one of the bills that was in Respondent's possession. The Hearing Committee found that Respondent fabricated the list of serial numbers. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 328-38).

During the South Korean proceedings, Respondent submitted the following documents:

- A February 15, 2008 letter with the signature of Commerce Bank employee Roxy Angha and notarized by Brian Vinson, containing the same list of serial numbers as the undated letter;
- A May 5, 2008 letter with the signature of Brian Vinson, describing how he was able to determine the serial numbers listed in the February 15, 2008 letter;
- An August 25, 2008 letter with the signature of Commerce Bank employee David Chalker, informing Respondent that Commerce Bank could not provide records to the Incheon District Court;
- A December 19, 2008 letter with the signature of David Chalker including purported "redacted copies of [the bank's] books, both initial handwritten pages and the final computerized version;"
- Five letters purportedly authored by Christopher Tucci, Senior Counsel at Commerce Bank, regarding Respondent's case; and

- A \$10,000 check issued to Erica Yoon from the account of a business, Worldwide Personnel, owned by Respondent's law partner, Christopher Teras.

The Hearing Committee found that Respondent forged and fabricated the Angha, Vinson, and Chalker letters and submitted them to the South Korean court to support her false representation that the bank was able to and had verified the serial numbers of the cash Respondent claimed belonged to her. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 337). Vinson, Angha, and Chalker denied creating the letters and consistently testified that the bank kept no records of serial numbers of the cash in their drawers. In addition to this testimony, the Hearing Committee noted numerous irregularities with the letters. They referred to a "branch" of Commerce Bank when Commerce Bank employees used the term "store." David Chalker's name was consistently misspelled as "Chaulker," and his and Brian Vinson's job title were incorrect. The May 5th letter contained the notarization of Carlos Gomez, a former Teras & Wilde employee, but Gomez denied notarizing the letter. Respondent did not explain how Gomez came to notarize the letter when she claimed to have personally picked up all of the letters from the bank. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 337-41). In addition, the Chalker letters contained statements he never would have made, such as accusing the South Korean judge of bias and stating that the bank took offense to the judge's questioning of the letters Respondent had provided. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 341-42).

The Hearing Committee further found that Respondent forged and submitted the Tucci letters in an effort to discredit the bank employees' deposition testimony, which Christopher Teras had submitted to the South Korean prosecutor. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 355-56). During the criminal hearing, Erica Yoon learned of the fabricated Angha, Vinson, and Chalker letters. She brought them to the attention of Teras, who reported them to the bank. The bank conducted an internal investigation and determined that the letters and documents Respondent submitted to the court were fraudulent and forged. While this was going on, Teras and Respondent dissolved their

partnership and Respondent filed suit against Teras. Teras obtained the bank employee depositions as part of that lawsuit. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 351-55).

After Respondent became aware that the prosecutor had the deposition transcripts, she created the Tucci letters and submitted them to the South Korean prosecutor and judge. The letters included statements that the transcripts were not authentic, Commerce Bank would not cooperate further with the court, and the court and the prosecutor should not accept any further documents from Commerce Bank. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 355-56). The last Tucci letter was submitted during Respondent's criminal appeal and included false representations and "the remarkable suggestion that the court admonish the Korean prosecutor." Tucci no longer worked for Commerce Bank when this letter was created. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 362-63).

The Hearing Committee further found that, around the same time Respondent forged the Tucci letters, she also forged three Worldwide Personnel checks that she sent to Erica Yoon, Theodore Kim, and a charity operated by Nancy Garland Miller. Kim was a consultant for Worldwide Personnel, and Miller provided bookkeeping services to Worldwide Personnel and Teras & Wilde. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 320, 360). The Hearing Committee found Teras did not make out or authorize the checks and had no knowledge of them. The \$10,000 check to Yoon contained a notation "JHW case" and was mailed to the address Yoon provided in her witness statement to the South Korean police. Yoon no longer lived at that address when the check was mailed. The Hearing Committee found that the check to Yoon "was an obvious effort to derail the Korean, and by then, American proceedings by making Ms. Yoon appear to have been paid off by Mr. Teras." (Adm. Ex. 1 at 360). In the criminal appeal proceedings, Respondent did in fact assert that Teras and Yoon were conspiring against her and used the \$10,000 check to support that argument. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 364-65).

The Hearing Committee found “overwhelming” evidence that Respondent fabricated and forged documents, gave false testimony in the South Korean court, and acted dishonestly and fraudulently. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 375). It recommended that Respondent be disbarred. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 383). Following the parties’ appeal to the D.C. Board of Professional Responsibility (Board), the Board adopted the Hearing Committee’s findings of fact and recommended disbarment. Both parties appealed the Board’s decision to the District of Columbia Court of Appeals (Court of Appeals). In its decision disbaring Respondent, the Court of Appeals determined that the Hearing Committee’s factual findings were supported by substantial evidence. In re Wilde, No. 19-BG-0702 at 25-28 (D.C. 2023).

The Court of Appeals, as well as the Hearing Committee and Board of Professional Responsibility, considered the factual findings in the Maryland disciplinary decision but declined to defer to them because more extensive evidence was presented in the District of Columbia and the Maryland decision misstated several key facts. Id. at 20-22.

EVIDENCE PRESENTED AT HEARING

Respondent testified on her own behalf, and her Exhibits 1-13 were admitted. The Administrator presented the testimony of Julia Porter, and Administrator’s Exhibit 1 was admitted.

FINDINGS OF FACT AND CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

This matter comes before us pursuant to the court’s order granting Respondent’s request for a hearing under Supreme Court Rule 763(d) following the Administrator’s filing of a petition for reciprocal discipline. Respondent asserts that the procedure in the District of Columbia was so lacking in notice or opportunity to be heard as to constitute a deprivation of due process; the District of Columbia’s investigative process was not comparable to the investigative process that

would have been conducted in Illinois; and her conduct warrants substantially less discipline than disbarment in Illinois.

In a reciprocal disciplinary proceeding, a sister tribunal's findings of misconduct are *res judicata*. In re Kesler, 89 Ill. 2d 151, 154 (1982). We review *de novo* whether the District of Columbia procedure deprived Respondent of due process, whether its investigative process was comparable to that of Illinois, and whether the proven misconduct warrants substantially less discipline in Illinois. See In re North, 02 RC 1503, M.R. 18078 (June 22, 2004) (Review Bd. at 2).

I. The evidence presented did not establish that Respondent was deprived of due process in the District of Columbia.

A. Summary

Respondent received due process in the District of Columbia proceeding. Her argument that the admission of hearsay evidence deprived her of a meaningful opportunity to be heard lacks merit.

B. Evidence Considered

Respondent testified to her version of the events surrounding her criminal conviction. She testified it was her practice to take cash when she traveled. (Tr. 40). Prior to the flight at issue, her law firm bookkeeper cashed a firm check for \$1,000 at Commerce Bank and gave Respondent the cash. (Tr. 41). Respondent had a "weird inkling" that she needed to document the cash she obtained, so she went back to the bank and asked one of the managers, Brian Vinson, to record the serial numbers of the cash she had just withdrawn. Respondent testified that Vinson did as she requested, and she left Vinson's letter containing the list of serial numbers on her office desk in Washington D.C. (Tr. 43). She acknowledged it was not her standard practice to make a list of serial numbers for cash she withdrew. She had a copy machine in her office but it did not occur to her to photocopy the bills. (Tr. 94-95).

Respondent testified that she obtained an additional \$1,000 in cash for her personal use, so she had a total of \$2,000 in cash when she boarded the flight. (Tr. 42). She did not make a list of the serial numbers for the cash she withdrew for personal expenses. (Tr. 91).

Respondent denied stealing money or going through Yoon's purse while on the flight. Respondent and her husband, who is a physician, were earning six-figure incomes so she had no need to steal money. (Tr. 45-46).

Respondent acknowledged that she did not mention the list of serial numbers to the South Korean police when they interviewed her immediately after the flight landed. (Tr. 91-92). She did not remember whether the police took photographs of the bills in question. (Tr. 93). She did not recall either the flight attendants or the police telling her that the serial numbers on the bills found in her possession were similar to the serial numbers on Yoon's bills. (Tr. 94).

Respondent testified that, the day after the flight, her bookkeeper faxed her a copy of the cancelled check for \$1,000 and the list of serial numbers. According to Respondent, she gave the police those documents. She testified that the list of serial numbers was accurate, and she did not intend to mislead the police. (Tr. 49-50). When asked to explain why one of the serial numbers on the list was the serial number of a bill from Yoon's wallet, Respondent testified that the flight purser may have mixed up the bills. (Tr. 99-100).

Respondent admitted submitting the Vinson, Angha, and Chalker letters to the South Korean court but denied submitting any documents that she knew were false or fraudulent. (Tr. 52). She stated that she asked Chalker if he could help her prove that her cash came from Commerce Bank because the court questioned the authenticity of the Vinson letters she had provided. According to Respondent, Chalker initially said no but, "a couple weeks later he calls me and says, I have a Christmas present for you . . . come down and pick up these documents."

(Tr. 56-57). Respondent testified she picked up documents from Chalker and instructed her assistant to mail them to her Korean attorney to submit to the court. (Tr. 57). Respondent denied creating the documents and stated she would not have misspelled Chalker's name because she had his business card and knew how to spell his name. (Tr. 58). Respondent testified that she personally picked up all letters written by Commerce Bank employees. (Tr. 104-105).

Respondent denied asking Christopher Tucci to generate any letters on her behalf. She testified that she did not submit the Tucci letters to the court and first became aware of them when her South Korean attorney sent them to her from the court files. Respondent believes the letters were submitted because the South Korean court asked the ministry of foreign affairs to contact Commerce Bank to seek verification of the documents. (Tr. 53-54).

Respondent denied forging any documents or checks. She denied writing checks on the Worldwide Personnel account at any time and denied having access to those checks. (Tr. 59, 60).

Respondent acknowledged that she was represented by counsel in the D.C. proceedings and she testified at length in those proceedings. She feels she was not heard because her version of events was not given consideration and was characterized as fabricated. (Tr. 86-87).

C. Analysis and Conclusions

Respondent asserts that the District of Columbia proceedings were so lacking in notice or opportunity to be heard that she was deprived of due process of law. In an attorney disciplinary proceeding, due process is satisfied when an attorney is given fair notice of the charges against him or her and an opportunity to explain and defend against the charges. North, 02 RC 1503, (Hearing Bd. at 15), citing In re Ruffalo, 390 U.S. 544, 549 (1968). When an attorney was represented at all times by counsel, was allowed to cross-examine witnesses, was allowed to appear and testify on his or her own behalf, and availed him or herself of all levels of review, the attorney "received the benefits that procedural due process requires." In re Witte, 99 Ill. 2d 301, 309 (1983).

Initially, we note that the majority of the evidence Respondent presented sought to refute the findings of the South Korean and District of Columbia tribunals and allege wrongdoing by her deceased former partner, Christopher Teras. Neither of these issues is properly before this Panel. It is not our role to revisit the District of Columbia's factual findings. A sister state's findings against an attorney who is disciplined in that state are to be given deference. "These findings should be considered in a manner similar to that used when a Respondent is facing discipline in Illinois based upon his conviction of a criminal offense. In such instances, just as a respondent's conviction of a criminal offense is considered conclusive on the issue of whether he committed the offense charged, so too the findings of a sister state are conclusive on the issue of whether the Respondent engaged in the misconduct found in that state." North, 02 RC 1503 (Hearing Bd. at 13-14).

Likewise, the purpose of this proceeding is not to assess the conduct of Christopher Teras. We will address his involvement in the investigative process below but otherwise decline to consider any wrongdoing alleged by Respondent.

Turning to the issues that are properly before us, it is undisputed that Respondent had notice of the charges filed against her in the District of Columbia, was represented by counsel for the entirety of those proceedings, testified and submitted evidence on her own behalf, cross-examined witnesses, and availed herself of all levels of review. Based on this undisputed evidence, Respondent was afforded due process in the District of Columbia proceedings.

We are not persuaded by Respondent's argument that she was denied due process because the District of Columbia unfairly relied on hearsay evidence in finding that she committed misconduct. With respect to the admission of evidence, D.C. Board of Professional Responsibility Rule 11.3 provides as follows:

Admission and Exclusion of Evidence

Evidence that is relevant, not privileged, and not merely cumulative shall be received, and the Hearing Committee shall determine the weight and significance to be accorded all items of evidence upon which it relies. The Hearing Committee may be guided by, but shall not be bound by the provisions or rules of court practice, procedure, pleading, or evidence, except as outlined in these rules or the Rules Governing the Bar.

Despite this provision that all relevant, unprivileged, non-cumulative evidence was to be received, Respondent contends that the admission of hearsay evidence over her objections, including South Korean police and court records, deprived her of due process. She argues that such evidence would never be admitted in an Illinois disciplinary hearing.

We disagree with Respondent that the evidence of which she complains would never be admitted in Illinois. In Illinois, the rules of evidence “need not be strictly applied in attorney disciplinary proceedings,” (In re Blank, 145 Ill.2d 534, 553 (1991)), and there are numerous exceptions to the prohibition on hearsay evidence. Thus, we do not find a meaningful variance between our evidentiary rules and Board Rule 11.3.

More importantly, Respondent has not established that the admission of hearsay evidence deprived her of an opportunity to be heard. She was permitted to object to disciplinary counsel’s evidence, and did object. She was also free to present argument on the weight such evidence deserved. Due process did not require the Hearing Committee to agree with her objections and argument, particularly when Board Rule 11.3 expressly permitted the admission of hearsay evidence. We also consider it significant that Board Rule 11.3 provided leniency to both parties with respect to the admission of evidence. Respondent was free to submit hearsay evidence as well. Under these circumstances, there was no unfairness to Respondent or deprivation of her opportunity to be heard.

II. The evidence did not establish that the investigative process in the District of Columbia was not comparable to the investigative process in Illinois.

A. Summary

There was no showing that the D.C. investigative process was not comparable to the investigative process in Illinois. Respondent's assertion that her former law partner manipulated the D.C. investigation was not supported by the evidence.

B. Evidence Considered

Respondent testified at length about her former law partner, Christopher Teras, the breakdown of their business relationship, and Teras's business, Worldwide Personnel. After Teras & Wilde dissolved in 2009, Respondent filed a lawsuit against Teras for an accounting of the partnership assets. The lawsuit was eventually resolved in 2017. (Tr. 66). A "huge part of the litigation" involved who would retain a major client, Case Farms. (Tr. 76). Respondent submitted evidence that Teras was the subject of three bar complaints to Virginia and D.C. alleging unethical conduct related to Worldwide Personnel and Case Farms.(Tr. 68-76; Resp. Exs. 6, 10, 11). There was no evidence that either Virginia or D.C. filed disciplinary charges against Teras. Teras, through his lawyer, filed the D.C. bar complaint against Respondent. (Tr. 157).

District of Columbia Deputy Disciplinary Counsel Julia Porter prosecuted Respondent's disciplinary matter. She has worked for the Office of Disciplinary Counsel since 1992. (Tr. 125-26). She gave the following testimony about the process for investigating disciplinary complaints. After a complainant's complaint is docketed, the matter is assigned to bar counsel to investigate. Bar counsel sends a letter to the respondent attorney providing the complaint and any related information bar counsel possesses, and requests a written response. (Tr. 129-30).

Porter testified that she does not have the ability to compel a respondent to provide a sworn statement and her ability to issue subpoenas for documents is limited to entities within a 25-mile

radius. Because D.C. does not have a civil discovery model, she depends on the cooperation of the respondent and the complainant to obtain relevant information. (Tr. 130-32).

When Porter determines that disciplinary charges are warranted, she prepares a charging document entitled a specification of charges, which must be approved by the Disciplinary Counsel. In addition, a designated lawyer member of the Hearing Committee, called a contact member, is sent the proposed charges along with the entire investigatory file to review. If the contact member approves the filing of disciplinary charges, the charges are filed with the D.C. Court of Appeals and served upon the respondent. The standard of proof in D.C. disciplinary proceedings is clear and convincing evidence. (Tr. 133-34).

Porter was assigned to investigate Respondent's matter in 2009. (Tr. 140). After she obtained a copy of Respondent's criminal conviction from South Korea and filed it with the court, the court declined to give preclusive effect to the conviction. (Tr. 141-43). Porter then proceeded with filing an original disciplinary action. After submitting proposed charges to the Hearing Committee contact member for approval, Porter filed a specification of charges that included the theft and additional misconduct. (Tr. 144). Porter considered the Maryland decision but made the decision to proceed with the D.C. disciplinary charges. (Tr. 144-45).

Porter testified that the process of obtaining information from South Korea was ongoing up until a few months before Respondent's disciplinary hearing and required her to "jump through lots of hoops." (Tr. 146-47). Porter asked the South Korean courts, the South Korean prosecutor's office, the South Korean embassy in Washington D.C., the State Department, a South Korean lawyer working in Washington D.C., as well as Respondent, through her counsel, for assistance in obtaining relevant documents. (Tr. 147-48). Porter obtained translations of all documents that were in Korean into to English. She retained an expert to explain how the criminal process works in

South Korea, how the record is created and witnesses' testimony is transcribed, and the checks and balances in the South Korean criminal justice system. (Tr. 148-50).

Respondent submitted email messages between Porter and Teras and between Yoon and Teras to support her assertion that Teras improperly influenced the D.C. investigation. (Resp. Exs. 2, 4, 9, 12). In 2010, before Porter filed charges against Respondent, she reached out to Yoon to confirm that Yoon would testify and ask for assistance with obtaining documents from the South Korean court. Yoon asked Teras to advise her how to reply. (Resp. Ex. 2). In December 2010, Teras emailed Porter and informed Porter of the date for Respondent's Maryland hearing. Teras indicated he would inform Yoon of the date and offered to inform her if her testimony would be needed in the District of Columbia. He also offered to review the D.C. charges for factual accuracy before Porter filed them. Porter responded that she would send the draft charges to him. (Resp. Ex. 4). The next email exchange is from January 2012, in which Porter sent Teras copies of three briefs filed in Respondent's matter and told Teras to let her know if he had questions or comments. Teras responded with multiple comments. In Porter's reply, she did not address Teras's comments but simply provided him with a copy of another brief she had filed. (Resp. Ex. 9). The next exchange was from July 2015, when Porter sent Teras a copy of her post-hearing brief. She did not ask Teras for his input, but Teras sent a response noting several typographical or other minor errors. (Resp. Ex. 12).

In addition, Respondent submitted a memorandum opinion from her litigation with Teras, Teras v. Wilde, Civil Action No. DKC 14-0244(D. Md. Feb. 27, 2017), in which the U.S. District Court for the District of Maryland granted summary judgment to Respondent on the issue of whether Teras violated a confidentiality provision of their settlement agreement by communicating with Porter about Respondent. (Resp. Ex. 13). Teras contended he was obligated to do so under

the rules of professional responsibility but the court ruled that, “Wherever the exact line between responding to lawful requests and voluntarily encouraging and assisting in a prosecution lies, Mr. Teras crossed it here.” The court further held that “there is no factual dispute that Mr. Teras voluntarily did more than what Ms. Porter requested in her emails.” (Resp. Ex. 13 at 217).

When asked about her communications with Teras, Porter testified that she is sure she communicated with him because she talks to complainants “all the time.” She denied that Teras was “running the show” with respect to prosecuting Respondent’s matter. (Tr. 157-58).

C. Analysis and Conclusions

Respondent asserts that the District of Columbia investigative process was not comparable to the investigative process that would have taken place in Illinois. Based on our research, this is the first Illinois proceeding to consider this issue.

We consider the investigative process to be the methods and procedures by which disciplinary counsel gathers information following notification of alleged unethical conduct and determines whether disciplinary charges are warranted. In an Illinois investigation, the Administrator may interview witnesses, take the respondent attorney’s sworn statement, and issue subpoenas for documents. See Ill. S. Ct. R. 754(a) and (b) (eff. Feb. 1, 2018). If the Administrator determines that there is sufficient evidence to support disciplinary charges, the Administrator is required to present a draft complaint to a panel of the Inquiry Board, which can vote to dismiss the charge, close an investigation, or file a complaint with the Hearing Board. Ill. S. Ct. R. 753(a) (eff. Apr. 1, 2024); Commission Rule 55.

When comparing another state’s investigative process, we find it appropriate to consider that state’s efforts to obtain relevant information, whether the respondent attorney had an opportunity to respond to the issues raised by the complaining witness, and whether there is a procedure for reviewing the investigation and approving the disciplinary charges before they are

filed. Based on Julia Porter's credible testimony, we find that the District of Columbia's investigative process was comparable to the investigative process in Illinois.

We found Porter to be a credible witness and a highly experienced disciplinary counsel. Similar to an Illinois investigative process, she obtained all relevant information about Respondent's criminal matter, gave Respondent an opportunity to provide her version of events, and considered the evidence, including the Maryland decision favorable to Respondent, when deciding whether to proceed with disciplinary charges. In addition, Porter obtained review and approval of the disciplinary charges before she filed them. In the District of Columbia, that process is done by a designated attorney contact member of the Hearing Committee instead of an Inquiry Panel as in Illinois. We do not find that to be a meaningful difference given that the contact member served the same function as an Inquiry Panel and reviewed Porter's entire investigatory file and work product before approving the filing of charges.

Notwithstanding the existence of comparable investigative procedures, Respondent contends the D.C. investigation was tainted because Porter allowed Christopher Teras to manipulate it to serve his own interests. Respondent's effort to focus our attention on Teras is a red herring. Even if we accept for the sake of argument that Teras assisted Porter for self-serving reasons, that by itself does not reasonably lead to the conclusion that Porter, an attorney with thirty years of experience prosecuting disciplinary cases, abandoned her independent judgment and allowed Teras to wield undue influence over her decision-making. On the contrary, the communications between Teras and Porter show that Porter's messages to Teras were brief and professional and Teras provided more input than Porter requested. The district court decision Respondent points to found the same thing—that Teras “voluntarily did more than what Ms. Porter requested.” Respondent would have us make the leap in logic that Porter was blind to Teras's

interests and allowed him to “run wild” in the investigation, but there is simply no evidentiary basis for that argument. The infrequency of the emails before us further supports our conclusion. The first email chain occurred in December 2010, the second in January 2012, and the third in July 2015. If Teras were influencing Porter’s investigation to the extent Respondent suggests, we would expect evidence of much more frequent communication than three email conversations in five and a half years. Accordingly, the foregoing evidence corroborates Porter’s credible testimony that Teras did not improperly influence her investigation and decision to pursue disciplinary charges against Respondent.

Similarly, the evidence does not support Respondent’s accusation that Teras improperly coached Erica Yoon to “get her story straight.” Teras and Yoon became acquainted as a result of Respondent’s criminal proceeding. We do not find it suspicious that Yoon, who was not a native English speaker, asked Teras for assistance in responding to Porter or that Teras communicated with Yoon about her ability to appear, given Yoon’s frequent travel.³

Respondent further argues that the length of the D.C. investigative process was unfair, as was Porter’s decision to investigate and charge her after the Maryland decision exonerated her. These arguments merit little discussion. The D.C. proceeding lasted many years because of extensive litigation over the effect of the foreign criminal conviction as well as the slow process of obtaining documents from South Korea. There is no indication that the delays were intentional or unnecessary. Nor is there evidence that Porter investigated and charged Respondent out of an improper motive. The D.C. Court of Appeals expressly ruled that Porter’s office could pursue an original proceeding, which is what she did.

For all of the foregoing reasons, we find that the investigative process in the District of Columbia was fair to Respondent and comparable to the investigative process in Illinois.

III. The evidence presented does not establish that less discipline than disbarment is warranted in Illinois.

A. Summary

Based on the extensive misconduct involving dishonesty, Respondent's false testimony in this matter, and the absence of evidence that would support a lesser sanction, the Hearing Board concludes that a lesser sanction than disbarment is not warranted.

B. Evidence Considered

After emigrating from South Korea when she was 13, Respondent lived in Illinois and attended college and law school here. She was licensed in Illinois in 1985 and practiced law here until 1989, when she moved to the Washington D.C. area. (Tr. 24-27, 36). She joined the District of Columbia bar in 1993 and the Maryland bar in 1995. (Resp. Ex. 5 at 79). She worked for the Department of Agriculture for several years and on political campaigns before going into private practice. (Tr. 26-33). Respondent testified that Maryland did not impose reciprocal discipline upon her after she was disbarred in the District of Columbia. After the disbarment, Respondent decided to retire from the Maryland bar, "and Maryland thought that was a good idea and allowed [her] to do that." Consequently, Respondent sold her practice and went on retirement status in Maryland in July 2024. She has been on retirement status in Illinois since 2011. She does not intend to practice law anywhere in the future. (Tr. 85).

C. Analysis and Conclusions

A sanction imposed in a sister state is persuasive but not binding, "and our adjudicatory bodies may recommend, and we may impose, different discipline where analysis of the evidence compels such result." Kesler, 89 Ill. 2d at 154. Respondent urges us to follow the Maryland decision as the more reliable and fair assessment of her conduct. Alternatively, she asserts that attorneys have received lesser sanctions than disbarment in Illinois for misconduct similar to that

found in the District of Columbia. The Administrator contends that reciprocal discipline of disbarment is warranted in Illinois.

We recognize that this matter presents the unusual situation of two states reaching opposite findings on the same or very similar allegations of misconduct⁴. We are not persuaded, however, that the Maryland decision provides a sound basis for recommending a lesser sanction than disbarment. Twenty witnesses testified before the D.C. Hearing Committee compared to nine in the Maryland proceeding. In the Maryland case, the testimony of key witness Erica Yoon was taken by telephone deposition prior to the hearing, without a translator. In the District of Columbia, Yoon testified in person with a translator. Also, the Maryland court lacked important evidence including the Tucci letters, the photocopies that South Korean police made of Yoon's and Respondent's seized bills, as well as the police seizure report listing the serial numbers of those bills. For these reasons, we determine that the evidence presented in the District of Columbia was more comprehensive and more reliable than the evidence presented in Maryland, and we decline to rely on the Maryland decision.

Respondent cites to the following Illinois cases in which attorneys who committed forgeries were suspended for two years or less. In In re Thebeau, 111 Ill.2d 251 (1986), the attorney was suspended for one year for conduct including submitting a false real estate contract to a court and notarizing contracts that he knew contained forged signatures. He did so in order to help resolve a client's probate matter. Although the court found that Thebeau's conduct warranted a two-year suspension, it reduced the suspension to one year because Thebeau had voluntarily stopped practicing law more than one year before the court issued its decision.

In In re Cummins, 96 SH 919, M.R. 13249 (March 21, 1997), the attorney consented to, and the court approved, a two-year suspension for creating fictitious bank records and financial

records to conceal his conversion of client funds. Cummins admitted his misconduct and expressed remorse for it. Less than one year after his two-year suspension was imposed, Cummins was disbarred on consent for submitting false evidence to the court in another matter. In re Cummins, M.R. 14342 (Jan. 29, 1998).

In In re Zanayed, 08 CH 124, M.R. 23509 (Jan. 21, 2010), the attorney received a two-year suspension, on consent, for forging and notarizing an opposing party's signature on multiple pleadings including an appearance and a proposed judgment for dissolution of marriage. In addition, he attempted to obstruct the Administrator's investigation into his conduct by paying a witness to withdraw her disciplinary complaint.

In In re Wiensch, 2018PR00103, M.R. 029652 (March 19, 2019), the attorney was suspended for two years on a reciprocal basis following his two-year suspension in Wisconsin. To help his clients' heirs avoid estate and gift taxes, Wiensch created and submitted altered documents to the Internal Revenue Service and forged a client's signature after the client died. Wiensch had no prior discipline, acknowledged his conduct, and cooperated with the disciplinary investigation.

While these cases involved the creation of fabricated documents similar to the matter before us, Respondent's deceptive acts were more extensive and more serious. She forged a greater number of documents and also gave false testimony in an attempt to deceive the court in her criminal proceeding. Unlike Thebeau, her conduct was not a misguided effort to help a client but an attempt to cover up her own criminal conduct. Unlike Cummins, Zanayed, and Wiensch, she has never acknowledged or taken responsibility for any of her misconduct.

As support for the position that reciprocal disbarment is warranted, the Administrator cites to the following cases involving theft and creation of false documents. In In re Mattes, 04 DC 1002, M.R. 19571 (Sept. 27, 2004), the attorney stole mail from his neighbors and used financial

information in that mail to obtain \$9,800 in merchandise and funds. He was disbarred on consent. The attorney in In re Burnham, 97 CH 22, M.R. 14176 (Jan. 29, 1998), stole almost \$18,000 from a bar association account while she was serving as an officer of that bar association and used the money to pay her own living expenses. To cover up her misuse of the funds, she fabricated a bank statement and provided it to the president of the bar association. Burnham failed to cooperate with the Administrator in the investigation of her conduct, failed to participate in her disciplinary proceedings, and failed to make restitution. In In re Pavchinskaya, 2016PR00037, M.R. 028531 (May 8, 2017), the attorney forged payroll checks totaling \$18,900 and presented them to currency exchanges to obtain cash. She also made misrepresentations to her employer to obtain bonuses for bringing in new clients, tendered a fraudulent check in settlement of a civil claim against her, and falsified information to a creditor regarding a personal debt. She failed to participate in her disciplinary proceeding and had been convicted of felony theft. In In re Khan, 02 RC 1515, M.R. 18301 (Sept. 20, 2002), the court imposed reciprocal discipline of disbarment upon an attorney who was convicted of two felony counts of falsifying documents in an immigration matter to expedite the issuance of work visas. The attorney cooperated in his Michigan proceeding and had no prior discipline, but was disbarred nonetheless.

The court has held that “Perpetration of a fraud upon this court or any tribunal ‘is conduct of such a serious nature as to warrant disbarment.’” In re Bell, 147 Ill. 2d 15, 38-39 (1992); see also In re Clifton, 94 SH 469, M.R. 12533 (May 28, 1996) (disbarment imposed upon attorney who made multiple misrepresentations in documents and testimony in his personal divorce proceeding); In re Plants, 2013PR00014, M.R. 25950 (May 20, 2013) (reciprocal disbarment warranted for prosecutor who intentionally withheld the identity of a confidential informant from opposing counsel, elicited false testimony during a trial, and made misleading arguments to a jury).

Thus, while Respondent's theft conviction alone likely would not warrant disbarment in Illinois, the multiple forgeries and false testimony she submitted to the South Korean courts warrant the most significant sanction.

Our consideration of whether a lesser sanction than disbarment is warranted includes the testimony Respondent gave in this hearing. She repeated testimony that both the South Korean and District of Columbia tribunals rejected as implausible and false, and that we also find to be false. Specifically, we find her testimony that she obtained the list of serial numbers from Commerce Bank before she left for South Korea, based on a "weird inkling," to be false. Not only does Respondent's explanation of how and why she purportedly obtained the list of serial numbers defy credulity, she could not have obtained the serial numbers on her list before her trip because one of the serial numbers was from a bill found in Erica Yoon's wallet. Respondent has no plausible explanation for how that occurred. We also find her testimony that she provided the list of serial numbers to the police the day after they interviewed her to be false. The District of Columbia found there is no record of her having produced the list to the police, the South Korean prosecutor, her own criminal defense attorney, or the South Korean court. We further find her testimony regarding her receipt of letters from Brian Vinson, Roxy Angha, and David Chalker, as well as the purported bank records she submitted to the South Korean court, to be false and contrary to common sense and human experience. We are not required to accept testimony that is inherently improbable and contrary to human experience. In re Wilkins, 2014PR00078, M.R. 028647 (May 18, 2017) (Hearing Bd. at 18). An attorney's false testimony in a disciplinary matter reflects negatively on the attorney's fitness to practice. In re Vavrik, 117 Ill. 2d 408, 415 (1987). It is especially troubling that Respondent has repeated this false testimony to four different tribunals for close to two decades.

In a reciprocal discipline case, the court has considered such evidence as the attorney’s “repentant attitude, his prior good reputation, and his community activities” in determining that substantially less discipline would have been imposed in Illinois. Kesler, 89 Ill. 2d at, 162-63. Here, Respondent presented no such evidence. Her testimony that she has practiced out of state since 1989, is currently retired, and has no plan to practice here in the future is insufficient to overcome the egregiously dishonest misconduct found by the District of Columbia and the lack of good character demonstrated by her false testimony in this hearing.

Accordingly, we recommend that reciprocal discipline of disbarment be imposed against Respondent, Jinhee Kim Wilde.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen S. Mitchell
Scott M. Hoster
Brian B. Duff

CERTIFICATION

I, Michelle M. Thome, Clerk of the Attorney Registration and Disciplinary Commission of the Supreme Court of Illinois and keeper of the records, hereby certifies that the foregoing is a true copy of the Report and Recommendation of the Hearing Board, approved by each Panel member, entered in the above entitled cause of record filed in my office on February 20, 2026.

/s/ Michelle M. Thome

Michelle M. Thome, Clerk of the
Attorney Registration and Disciplinary
Commission of the Supreme Court of Illinois

4921-7083-4320, v. 1

¹ Initially, the D.C. Office of Disciplinary Counsel sought Respondent’s automatic disbarment under D.C. Code § 11-2503(a) and D.C. Bar R. XI, § 10. In 2013, the D.C. Court of Appeals dismissed that proceeding based on its determination that a conviction in a foreign country was not a conviction of a crime within the meaning of the applicable rule and statute. However, it held that the Office of Disciplinary Counsel could pursue an original disciplinary proceeding against Respondent (D.C. Bar R. XI, § 8)), in which the foreign conviction could be given collateral

estoppel effect if the Office of Disciplinary Counsel established that it would be fair and reasonable to do so. (Resp. Ex. 7).

² An initial specification of charges was filed on September 8, 2014, with an amended specification of charges filed on January 30, 2015. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 312-13).

³ While not related to the investigative process, we note that Respondent also had the opportunity during the D.C. hearing to cross-examine Teras and Yoon about any allegedly improper conduct.

⁴ As the Board of Professional Responsibility noted, D.C. disciplinary counsel charged more Rule violations than did Maryland bar counsel. (Adm. Ex. 1 at 1477).