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July 27, 2016

Sebastian Onye Ibezim, Jr.
c/o Juliana E. Blackburn, Esq.
936 Broad Street (2nd Floor)
Newark, New Jersey 07102

Re: In the Matter of Sebastian Onye Ibezim, Jr.
Docket No. DRB 16-161
District Docket No. VA-2014-0003E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. Ibezim:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed the motion for discipline by consent (admonition), filed by the District VA Ethics Committee in the above matter, pursuant to R. 1:20-10. Following a review of the record, the Board determined to grant the motion and to impose an admonition.

Specifically, in July 2009, Maria Esteves retained you to represent her in a claim for injuries sustained in an automobile accident that had occurred a month earlier. After filing a complaint in December 2010, you learned that the defendants could not be served at the addresses furnished for them. Thereafter, and despite having received a court notice to serve the complaint with information from the Motor Vehicle Commission, you took no action, and the complaint was dismissed without prejudice. Later, you failed to reinstate the complaint, resulting in its 2012 dismissal with prejudice. Your dilatory conduct constituted lack of diligence, a violation of RPC 1.3.

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In addition, you failed to inform Esteves about important events in the case, including the problems serving the defendant and the dismissal of the complaint. In so doing, you violated RPC 1.4(b) and (c).

Although you stipulated that you had also engaged in a pattern of neglect (RPC 1.1(b)), the stipulation contained no facts to support such a violation and your prior ethics history does not support such a charge. The Board, thus, dismissed the RPC 1.1(b) charge as not applicable.

The Board rejected the statement in mitigation contained in the stipulation that your actions in this matter occurred contemporaneously with those in a similar, earlier matter under DRB Docket No. 15-161, for which you received an admonition on July 22, 2015. Rather, the July 2011 ethics grievance in that matter alleged gross neglect and failure to communicate. By virtue of the ethics investigation that followed, you were on notice in July 2011 that dilatory conduct on your part would not be tolerated. Despite that notice, you continued to engage in the same sort of misconduct here, lacking diligence in Esteves' matter for over a year thereafter, through the summer of 2012.

Your conduct has adversely reflected not only upon you as an attorney but also upon all members of the bar. Accordingly, the Board has directed the issuance of this admonition to you. R. 1:20-15(f)(4).

A permanent record of this occurrence has been filed with the Clerk of the Supreme Court and the Board's office. Should you become the subject of any further discipline, it will be taken into consideration.

The Board has also directed that the costs of the disciplinary proceedings be assessed against you. An invoice of costs will be forwarded under separate cover.

Very truly yours,



Ellen A. Brodsky
Chief Counsel

EAB/paa
See attached

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c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
Associate Justices
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Mark Neary, Clerk
Supreme Court of New Jersey
Gail G. Haney, Deputy Clerk
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