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ASSISTANT COUNSEL

January 21, 2020

**VIA CERTIFIED MAIL, R.R.R., REGULAR MAIL & E-MAIL**

Vincent S. Verdiramo  
c/o Robert J. DeGroot, Esq.  
60 Park Place, Suite 105  
Newark, NJ 07102  
robertjdegroot@aol.com

Re: In the Matter of Vincent S. Verdiramo  
Docket No. DRB 19-255  
District Docket No. XIV-2017-0155E  
**LETTER OF ADMONITION**

Dear Mr. Verdiramo:

The Disciplinary Review Board has reviewed your conduct in the above matter and has concluded that it was improper.<sup>1</sup> Following a review of the record, the Board determined to impose an admonition for your violation of RPC 1.15(a) (negligent misappropriation of client funds), RPC 1.15(d) (failure to comply with the recordkeeping provisions of R. 1:21-6), and RPC 5.3(a) and (b) (failure to supervise non-attorney staff).

Specifically, this case involved the theft of \$149,132.15 in client funds from your attorney trust account (ATA) by your secretary of twenty-four years, Margaret Fenlon. In July 2008, after working for you for thirteen years, Fenlon began drafting unauthorized trust account checks and forging your signature on them. She also drafted checks and, under false pretenses, procured your genuine signature. You admitted that, at times, Fenlon presented you with a "stack of checks" from the trust account, which you would sign without reviewing, because you trusted her. You never suspected her deception, which occurred between 2008 and 2016, and affected at least twenty-four client trust accounts. Ultimately, Fenlon returned \$149,132.15 to the law firm, the amount she estimated she had stolen.

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<sup>1</sup> Member Gallipoli was recused.

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You admitted that Fenlon's opportunity to steal "was the result of the lack of internal controls common in a small firm and the trust placed in her by the firm regarding her as a long-term employee." You acknowledged, however, that the ultimate responsibility for the internal controls of the firm, including the recordkeeping obligations of R. 1:21-6, rested with you. Despite your denial that you negligently misappropriated client funds, the Board disagreed, determining that your abrogation of your recordkeeping obligations, especially your failure to review canceled ATA checks and your failure to conduct three-way reconciliations of your ATA, created the environment within which Fenlon could operate, and allowed her prolonged scheme of theft to continue, undetected, for years.

In imposing only an admonition, the Board considered, in mitigation, your lack of prior discipline in thirty-three years at the bar; your prompt reimbursement of \$55,000 in stolen trust funds; your retention of an accounting firm to identify all of Fenlon's criminal activity; your efforts to rectify all recordkeeping deficiencies; and your good reputation, as evidenced by character letters submitted in the record. Moreover, upon discovering Fenlon's theft, you immediately fired her, reported her conduct to ethics authorities, quickly identified and contacted all affected clients, and voluntarily offered information to the Office of Attorney Ethics regarding Fenlon's theft, even though it predated the period of review of a random audit of your firm's attorney records that the Office of Attorney Ethics conducted. The Board also considered that Fenlon's theft was carefully hidden from you, and that you neither participated in, nor benefited from, her scheme.

Your conduct has adversely reflected not only on you as an attorney but also on 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, this admonition will be taken into consideration.

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

Very truly yours,



Ellen A. Brodsky  
Chief Counsel

c: See Attached List

I/M/O Vincent S. Verdiramo, DRB 19-255

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c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner  
Associate Justices  
Heather Joy Baker, Clerk  
Supreme Court of New Jersey  
Bruce W. Clark, Chair  
Disciplinary Review Board (e-mail)  
Gail G. Haney, Deputy Clerk  
Supreme Court of New Jersey (w/ethics history)  
Charles Centinaro, Director  
Office of Attorney Ethics (interoffice mail and e-mail)  
Eugene A. Racz, Presenter  
Office of Attorney Ethics (e-mail)