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SUPREME COURT OF NEW JERSEY

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January 22, 2026

VIA CERTIFIED, REGULAR, AND ELECTRONIC MAIL

Christopher J. LaMonica, Esq.
44 Princeton Avenue
Brick, NJ 08724-3550
chris@lamonicanjlaw.com

Re: **In the Matter of Christopher J. LaMonica**
Docket No. DRB 25-273
District Docket No. IIIA-2024-0003E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. LaMonica:

The Disciplinary Review Board (the Board) has reviewed the motion for discipline by consent (reprimand or such lesser discipline as the Board deems appropriate) filed by the District IIIA Ethics Committee (the DEC) in the above matter, pursuant to R. 1:20-10(b). Following a review of the record, the Board granted the motion and determined to impose an admonition for your violation of RPC 1.3 (lacking diligence) and RPC 1.4(b) (failing to communicate with a client).

Specifically, in or around November 2020, Dr. Brian Trainor retained you to represent him in connection with the administration of his mother's estate (the Estate). Dr. Trainor, who also was your personal physician, served as the executor of the Estate. Pursuant to the decedent's will, the Estate assets, which

included various capital stock holdings, were to be distributed to Dr. Trainor and his two sisters, Carol and Gloria Trainor.

During the initial period of your representation, spanning through August 2022, you undertook diligent efforts to facilitate the distribution of the Estate's various stock holdings, which consisted of shares of Merck, MetLife, Brighthouse Financial, and Cigna Corporation stock. You also took appropriate action to ensure that any dividends accruing on the Estate's primary Merck shares – which, apparently, were the only shares left undistributed at the time of the ethics grievance – were being deposited into the Estate's checking account for eventual distribution to the beneficiaries. The final transfer and three-way distribution of those shares, however, was complicated by “[a]n issue [that] arose as to the location of Merck stock certificates[,] which were required to be surrendered to the stock transfer agent.” Apparently, because Dr. Trainor was residing in Arizona at the time, he had difficulty in securing the notarized documents, signature guarantees, and stock certificates that were needed to fully effectuate the transfers. Indeed, it was not until August 8, 2022 – the date of your final note to the file – when Dr. Trainor finally notified you that he had “found some . . . and perhaps all of” the missing Merck stock certificates and would be sending them to your office.

In the months that followed your August 2022 note to the file, you continued to have medical-related interactions with Dr. Trainor, in his capacity as your personal physician. Although you additionally recalled having engaged in some Estate-related conversations with Dr. Trainor during that same timeframe, including at least one conversation in which the two of you had agreed that “the stock transfer paperwork could be addressed, in person . . . when Dr. Trainor returned to New Jersey,” you admittedly were unable to produce any records verifying the occurrence, or confirming the specific dates or substance, of those Estate-related conversations.

On September 5, 2023, Gloria Trainor filed an ethics grievance, alleging that you had failed to timely effectuate the transfer of the Estate's capital stock holdings and had further failed to keep Dr. Trainor or the Estate's other beneficiaries reasonably apprised of the status of the stock transfers. Although the grievant acknowledged that you successfully had distributed most of the Estate's assets within two years of the decedent's death,¹ she nevertheless

¹ The decedent passed away on July 24, 2020.

asserted that, by the summer of 2022, there were still several stock transfers remaining unfulfilled. She further alleged that, despite her earlier attempt to arrange a meeting with you, in the summer of 2022, for the purpose of discussing the distribution of the final annuities, and despite more than thirty subsequent attempts by Dr. Trainor to contact you by telephone, e-mail, and in-person office visits, both she and Dr. Trainor had been “unable to reach [you] to have [the remaining] stocks transferred and distributed.”

In your reply to the grievance, you admitted that “the efficient and timely transfer of the capital stock did not take place between [your]self and” Dr. Trainor, that “[t]he delay should not have happened,” that you lacked any “meaningful way to present a defense to the grievance,” and that your “lack of diligence [in the matter] is obvious.” You emphasized, however, that: (1) you had maintained regular contact with Dr. Trainor, and had participated in several office meetings with Dr. Trainor and the other beneficiaries (including the grievant), during the initial part of the representation; (2) you had known the entire Trainor family since early childhood (approximately sixty years); (3) Dr. Trainor currently served as your personal physician; and (4) you previously had performed legal work for the Trainor family, without incident. As a result, you expressed surprise and “deep[] regret” that the grievant had been so dissatisfied with your representation as to file a grievance against you. Although you acknowledged that, “[p]erhaps a more aggressive approach with Dr. Trainor was required,” you noted that you “never felt that [such an approach] was warranted,” especially because you never expected a grievance to be filed by “a member of a family that I have known since the late 1960s, and who never gave any indication of [her] dissatisfaction” with the representation.

Although you ultimately transferred the Estate matter to another attorney for resolution of the outstanding stock transfers, you admittedly did not do so until April 2024 – more than eighteen months after your August 2022 note to the file – after you were diagnosed, in March, with a serious medical condition that necessitated intensive and ongoing treatment. As a result, it was not until early 2025 that the substitute attorney was able to complete the remaining stock transfers and close the Estate. Although you acknowledged that you perhaps “should have. . . [solicited the assistance of the substitute attorney] at the outset . . . as a more efficient way of providing for the [stock] transfer,” you explained that you had not done so because (1) you had not been informed that any beneficiary was suffering from financial hardship, which would have

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necessitated the more urgent progression and completion of the stock transfers, (2) you had not been instructed to effectuate the more immediate transfer of the remaining stocks, to any beneficiary, for liquidation purposes, and (3) the grievant had not indicated any dissatisfaction with your representation.

Based on the foregoing facts, you stipulated that you violated RPC 1.3 by failing to take any verifiable action, between August 8, 2022 (the date of your last note to the file) and September 5, 2023 (the date on which the grievance was filed), and prior to your transfer of the matter, in April 2024, to effectuate the timely distribution of the Estate's remaining stock holdings. You further stipulated that you violated RPC 1.4(b) by failing to keep Dr. Trainor reasonably apprised, during the same timeframe, of the status of the stock transfers.

In imposing only an admonition, the Board accorded significant mitigating weight to the fact that you stipulated to your misconduct, thereby conserving disciplinary resources, and demonstrated sincere remorse. In further mitigation, the Board weighed the fact that the grievance was filed by a non-client beneficiary of the Estate, whereas Dr. Trainor – your client in the matter – made it clear that he was satisfied with the representation, was not concerned with the delay in the transfer of the Estate's stock holdings, did not attribute that delay to your lack of diligence, and did not believe that either he or the Estate was aggrieved by that delay. In further mitigation, the Board considered your then undiagnosed medical condition, which may have contributed to the misconduct.

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.

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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,

/s/ Timothy M. Ellis

Timothy M. Ellis
Chief Counsel

TME/knd
Enclosures

c: (w/o enclosures)
Chief Justice Stewart Rabner
Associate Justices
Heather Joy Baker, Clerk
Supreme Court of New Jersey
Hon. Mary Catherine Cuff, P.J.A.D. (Ret.), Chair
Disciplinary Review Board (e-mail)
Johanna Barba Jones, Director
Office of Attorney Ethics (e-mail and interoffice mail)
Ryan J. Moriarty, Statewide Ethics Coordinator
Office of Attorney Ethics (e-mail)
Kathleen C. Moriarty, Esq., Chair
District IIIA Ethics Committee (e-mail)
Steven Secare, Esq., Secretary
District IIIA Ethics Committee (e-mail and regular mail)
Laura M. Halm, Presenter
District IIIA Ethics Committee (e-mail)
Gloria Trainor, Grievant (regular mail)