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September 29, 2026

VIA CERTIFIED, REGULAR & ELECTRONIC MAIL

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Re: In the Matter of Charles Chinedum Chikezie
Docket No. DRB 26-146
District Docket No. XIV-2024-0404E
LETTER OF ADMONITION

Dear Mr. Chikezie:

The Disciplinary Review Board (the Board) has reviewed your conduct in the above-referenced matter and has concluded that it was improper. Following a review of the record, the Board determined to impose an admonition for your violation of RPC 1.15(d) (failing to comply with the recordkeeping requirements of R. 1:21-6) and RPC 8.1(b) (failing to cooperate with disciplinary authorities).

Specifically, on March 19, 2024, the Office of Attorney Ethics (the OAE) conducted a random audit of your financial records, which revealed \$2,479.16 in unidentified attorney trust account (ATA) funds, among other recordkeeping deficiencies. Thereafter, on August 29, 2024, following your failure to provide relevant financial documents, the OAE commenced a disciplinary investigation.

On October 8, 2024, the OAE directed you to submit your complete financial records associated with your law practice, dating back to January 2022. Additionally, the OAE required that you provide, among other information, a written explanation regarding the status of the \$2,479.16 in unidentified ATA funds.

On October 24, 2024, you sent the OAE a letter, providing some of the required financial records and representing that you could not identify the \$2,479.16 in ATA funds.

Several weeks later, on November 19, 2024, the OAE conducted a demand audit, which revealed that you maintained unidentified ATA balances and failed to maintain (1) a ledger for attorney funds held for bank fees; (2) compliant three-way ATA reconciliations;¹ (3) an ATA checkbook with a running cash balance; and (4) attorney business account (ABA) receipts and disbursements journals.

Subsequently, on November 27, 2024, the OAE sent you a letter, informing you of the recordkeeping infractions and directing that you submit corrected records by December 20, 2024. Additionally, the OAE required that you remit the unidentified ATA funds for deposit with the Superior Court Trust Fund Unit (the TFU), pursuant to R. 1:21-6(j). However, you failed to comply.

Two months later, on January 27, 2025, the OAE instructed you to provide an update on the outstanding documents. In reply, on January 28, you expressed your commitment to provide the required materials within two weeks, claiming that you had been “in Nigeria for about a month when the [November 2024] correspondence arrived.”

One month later, on February 26, 2025, following your continued failure to cooperate, the OAE sent you an e-mail message, requiring that you provide an update on your efforts to submit the corrected records.

Thereafter, on March 5, 2025, you provided the OAE with deficient financial records, including ATA reconciliations containing the same errors identified during the November 2024 demand audit. Moreover, your submission

¹ Respondent’s ATA reconciliations were inaccurate because the sum of entrusted funds featured in his client ledgers failed to match the balances listed in his bank statements and ATA journals.

failed to contain ABA journals or an ATA checkbook with a running cash balance. However, in your submission, you claimed that you had remitted the unidentified ATA funds to the TFU.

On May 12, 2025, after reviewing your submission, the OAE discussed the deficiencies with you and directed that you provide corrected records by May 27, 2025. You again failed to comply.

More than two weeks later, on May 28, 2025, the OAE attempted to call you and sent you an e-mail message, again instructing you to submit the corrected records. Subsequently, on June 2, 2025, your bookkeeper called the OAE, following which you authorized the OAE to communicate with your bookkeeper regarding the records. Eleven days later, on June 13, the OAE sent you and your bookkeeper another e-mail message, directing that you provide an update on the outstanding materials.

In a June 17, 2025 e-mail message to the OAE, your bookkeeper submitted deficient ATA reconciliations and claimed that she could not provide the remaining records because she had not met with you to review those materials. The bookkeeper also informed the OAE that, on March 5, 2025, you had remitted the unidentified ATA funds to the TFU. Also on June 17, 2025, the OAE replied to your bookkeeper, noting that the ATA reconciliations featured the same, previously identified errors. The OAE, however, explained the procedures to correct the reconciliations to the bookkeeper.

Thereafter, on June 26, 2025, the OAE learned that the TFU had rejected your attempt to remit the unidentified funds, given your failure to provide a compliant affidavit and to ensure that your ATA remittance check listed consistent numerical and written sums of unidentified funds.

Several weeks later, on July 28, 2025, following your failure to submit (1) corrected three-way ATA reconciliations, (2) an ATA checkbook with a running cash balance, and (3) ABA journals, the OAE filed a formal ethics complaint, charging you with recordkeeping infractions and failure to cooperate.

In September 2025, you filed verified answers to the formal ethics complaint. Additionally, in or around that same timeframe, through counsel, you “interacted with the OAE to provide additional records and information.”

Subsequently, on December 8, 2025, the TFU informed the OAE that it had received your November 24, 2025 ATA check remitting the unidentified funds.

One month later, on January 7, 2026, you demonstrated to the OAE that he had corrected all his recordkeeping errors.

Thus, by failing to comply with the recordkeeping requirements of R. 1:21-6, you violated RPC 1.15(d).

Next, you violated RPC 8.1(b) by failing to cooperate fully with the OAE's investigation. Specifically, between October 2024 and January 2026, you failed to comply with the OAE's numerous directives to submit compliant records that you were required, by Rule, to maintain for inspection. Frequently, you also failed to adequately communicate with the OAE and, when you did respond, you failed to produce ABA journals or a compliant ATA checkbook. Moreover, you repeatedly submitted ATA reconciliations containing the same errors that the OAE had identified at the outset of the investigation. Nevertheless, as stated, you cured all remaining deficiencies.

In imposing only an admonition, the Board attributed considerable weight to your unblemished thirty-year career at the bar. In further mitigation, you stipulated to your misconduct, thereby conserving disciplinary resources, and you rectified your recordkeeping deficiencies. Although you were the subject of a previous random audit, in 2008, the record lacked clear and convincing evidence that you had a heightened awareness of your recordkeeping responsibilities based solely on having participated in that audit.

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 Office of Board Counsel. 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,

/s/ Timothy M. Ellis

Timothy M. Ellis
Chief Counsel

TME/akg

c: Chief Justice Stuart Rabner
Associate Justices
Heather Joy Baker, Clerk
Supreme Court of New Jersey
Hon. Mary Catherine Cuff, P.J.A.D. (Ret.), Chair
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