

**ATTORNEY GRIEVANCE COMMISSION
OF MARYLAND**

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE COUNSEL AND DIRECTOR

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MARIANNE J. LEE
EXECUTIVE COUNSEL & DIRECTOR

February 18, 2022

William Lawrence Welch III, Esquire
5305 Village Center Drive
Suite 142
Columbia, MD 21044

RE: BC Docket No. 2020-1351
Complainant: Ymani Johnson

Dear Mr. Welch:

The Attorney Grievance Commission, at its meeting on February 16, 2022, approved the proposed Reprimand agreed upon by you and Bar Counsel and directed that this letter of Reprimand be administered to you.

Pursuant to Maryland Rule 19-717, the Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland hereby reprimands William Lawrence Welch, III, Respondent, for engaging in professional misconduct that violated Rules 19-301.3 (diligence), 19-301.4(a) (communication), and 19-308.4(a) (misconduct) of the Maryland Attorneys' Rules of Professional Conduct (MARPC).

On March 6, 2018, Ymani Johnson pleaded guilty to two counts of second-degree assault and was sentenced to twenty-five years in prison, thirteen years suspended, and five years of probation (*State v. Johnson*, Circuit Court for Harford County, Case No. 12-K-17-001480). Subsequently, Mr. Johnson sought post-conviction relief on the basis that his plea was not voluntary, that he received ineffective assistance of counsel, and that the prosecutor engaged in misconduct. On January 28, 2020, the case was paneled to the Respondent. Between January 2020 and November 2020, the Respondent failed to timely and adequately communicate with Mr. Johnson and failed to respond to Mr. Johnson's requests for information, given his concerns over maintaining the attorney-client privilege with Mr. Johnson while he was incarcerated and the fact that he could not visit Mr. Johnson in person given the ongoing Covid-19 Pandemic. The Respondent's conduct violated MARPC Rules 19-301.3 and 19-301.4.

CERTIFIED – RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED

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On November 18, 2020, the Respondent spoke with Mr. Johnson by telephone and discussed the case. In January 2021, Mr. Johnson wrote to the Respondent and requested an update on his case. The Respondent failed to timely respond to Mr. Johnson's request for information. Between January 2021 and April 2021, the Respondent, again, failed to communicate with Mr. Johnson or respond to his multiple requests for information in further violation of MARPC Rules 19-301.3 and 19-301.4. After Mr. Johnson and the Respondent had substantive discussions about the case, Mr. Johnson disagreed with the Respondent's recommended strategy and the Respondent withdrew from the representation on June 9, 2021.

Pursuant to Maryland Rule 19-717, the Attorney Grievance Commission of Maryland hereby reprimands William Lawrence Welch, III, Respondent, for engaging in professional misconduct that violated Rules 19-301.3, 19-301.4(a) and 19-308.4(a) of the Maryland Attorneys' Rules of Professional Conduct (MARPC).

The Maryland Rules provide that a reprimand constitutes discipline which is public and open to inspection. Bar Counsel will be providing a copy of this letter to the Complainant.

Sincerely,



Marianne J. Lee
Executive Counsel and Director

MJL/sg

cc: Daniel Hodges, Esquire
Clara H. Salzberg, Esquire

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