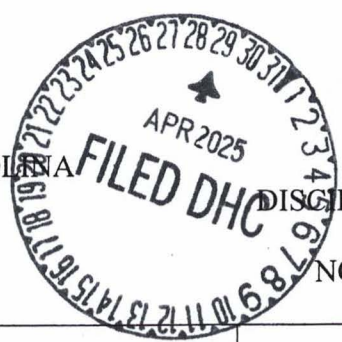


STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY



BEFORE THE  
DISCIPLINARY HEARING COMMISSION  
OF THE  
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
24 DHC 15

THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR,

Plaintiff

v.

EDDIE L. MEEKS, Attorney,

Defendant

ORDER IMPOSING DISCIPLINE

THIS MATTER was heard on April 16, 2025, by a hearing panel of the Disciplinary Hearing Commission composed of Brian O. Beverly, Chair, Catherine Constantinou, and Scarlett Hargis pursuant to 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0115. Robert W. Weston represented Plaintiff, the North Carolina State Bar. Defendant, Eddie L. Meeks (“Defendant”), was not represented and did not make an appearance in this matter.

Pursuant to 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0115(g)(2)(A), upon Defendant’s default, the Hearing Panel granted Plaintiff’s Motion for Order Entering Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law and filed an Order Entering Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law (the “Misconduct Order”) on November 27, 2024. In the Misconduct Order, the Hearing Panel determined that Defendant engaged in professional misconduct that violated the North Carolina Rules of Professional Conduct. The sole remaining issue to be determined at the April 16, 2025 hearing was what discipline, if any, was appropriate based on that misconduct.

Based upon the pleadings and the facts deemed admitted by default in this case and set forth in the Misconduct Order, and pursuant to 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0115(f) and (g)(2)(B) of the North Carolina State Bar Discipline and Disability Rules, the hearing panel hereby finds by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence the following:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Plaintiff, the North Carolina State Bar (“State Bar”), is a body duly organized under the laws of North Carolina and is the proper party to bring this proceeding under the authority granted it in Chapter 84 of the General Statutes of North Carolina, and the Rules and Regulations of the North Carolina State Bar (Chapter 1 of Title 27 of the North Carolina Administrative Code).

2. Defendant, Eddie L. Meeks (“Defendant”), was licensed to practice law in North Carolina on August 24, 2007, and is and was at all times referred to herein, an attorney at law

licensed to practice in North Carolina, subject to the laws of the State of North Carolina, the Rules and Regulations of the North Carolina State Bar, and the Rules of Professional Conduct.

3. During all or part of the relevant periods referred to herein, Defendant was engaged in the practice of law in the State of North Carolina and maintained a law office in Gastonia, North Carolina.

4. In 2020, Defendant represented MarKeith Tate (“Mr. Tate”) and Superior Christian Tate (“Ms. Christian”), a married couple, in a domestic violence protective order action brought against a third-party.

5. The third-party against whom Ms. Christian and Mr. Tate sought a protective order was a paramour with whom Mr. Tate and an extramarital affair while married to Ms. Christian.

6. After the protective order action resolved in early 2021, Mr. Tate and Ms. Christian separated.

7. Ms. Christian then filed an action in May 2021 against Mr. Tate for post-separation support, alimony, and equitable distribution (the “Family Law Action”).

8. In part, the separation and Family Law Action resulted from the extramarital affair.

9. Attorney Lauren Lowry represented Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action and appeared as counsel of record.

10. Attorney Larry Hoyle represented Mr. Tate in the Family Law Action and appeared as counsel of record.

11. While the Family Law Action proceeded, Defendant provided Ms. Christian legal services in it.

12. Specifically, Ms. Christian met with Defendant in October 2021 and informed him that she was receiving harassing messages from an unknown phone number that she believed belonged to Mr. Tate’s paramour.

13. Ms. Christian asked Defendant to issue a subpoena on her behalf in the Family Law Action to the text message service provider to obtain the subscriber and account information connected to the phone number.

14. Defendant agreed to Ms. Christian’s request.

15. Ms. Christian paid Defendant a fee to issue the subpoena on her behalf in the Family Law Action.

16. In total, Defendant’s meeting with Ms. Christian lasted between 30 minutes to one hour.

17. By the end of the meeting, Defendant had prepared and signed a subpoena to the text message service provider—TextNow, Inc. (“TextNow”)—under the caption of Ms. Christian’s Family Law Action against Mr. Tate.

18. Defendant sent the subpoena to TextNow via e-mail the same day as his meeting with Ms. Christian, along with a cover letter.

19. Defendant did not serve the subpoena to TextNow via any method authorized under the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure.

20. TextNow was a foreign company, with its principal place of business in Canada.

21. When Defendant sent the subpoena to TextNow, TextNow did not have a physical presence in North Carolina and did not have a registered agent in North Carolina to accept service of process.

22. When Defendant sent the subpoena to TextNow, TextNow was not subject to subpoena power of Rule 45 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure.

23. The subpoena that Defendant sent to TextNow via e-mail on Ms. Christian’s behalf was not enforceable.

24. Defendant did not inform TextNow that the subpoena he sent to it was not enforceable in the foreign jurisdiction or that TextNow was not required to comply with the subpoena.

25. To the contrary, Defendant expressly told TextNow that the subpoena was “a duly signed and lawful subpoena.”

26. Defendant also falsely marked the indication on the subpoena certifying that he had served it upon TextNow via registered or certified mail, receipt requested and attached.

27. Competent and diligent representation of Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action would have required her counsel to explore information regarding the extramarital affair from the protective order action in which Defendant represented Mr. Tate.

28. Defendant’s representation of Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action was materially limited by his inability to explore the information from the protective order action, as well as by his inability to accept the representation of Ms. Christian in the matter without informed written consent from Mr. Tate.

29. The Family Law Action was a substantially related matter to the protective order action.

30. Before issuing the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, Defendant did not get informed consent, confirmed in writing, from Mr. Tate or Ms. Christian waiving the conflicts of interest Defendant had in representing Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action against Mr. Tate.

31. Before issuing the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, Defendant never communicated with Ms. Christian or Mr. Tate about the conflict of interest affecting his ability to take such action on Ms. Christian's behalf.

32. Before issuing the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, Defendant did not investigate any of the issues in the Family Law Action or discuss them with Ms. Christian.

33. When he issued the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, Defendant did not know any issue in the Family Law Action to which the subpoenaed materials might be relevant, other than his understanding that Ms. Christian and Mr. Tate were disputing in the Family Law Action the identity of the sender of the harassing messages.

34. Before issuing the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, Defendant did not perform any research on his legal or ethical obligations other than purportedly reading Rule 45 of the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure and the back of the Administrative Office of Courts form civil subpoena.

35. When Defendant issued the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, he was insufficiently familiar with the North Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure to handle the matter competently.

36. Defendant knew or should have known that he was not competent to handle the issuance of a subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action without associating with another competent lawyer, performing sufficient legal and ethical research, or familiarizing himself with the Family Law Action.

37. Defendant never filed a notice of appearance in the Family Law Action or took any other steps to inform the court, Mr. Tate, or either party's counsel of record in that action that he was representing Ms. Christian in any capacity in the matter.

38. Defendant never served Mr. Tate or his counsel, Mr. Hoyle, with a copy of the subpoena he issued on behalf of Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action.

39. Defendant never notified Mr. Tate, Mr. Hoyle, Ms. Lowry, or the court that he had issued the subpoena on behalf of Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action.

40. On February 21, 2022, the State Bar served Defendant with a Letter of Notice in grievance file no. 21G0825 ("Grievance 21G0825") concerning the matters set forth in Paragraphs 4-39 of these Findings of Fact.

41. The Letter of Notice disclosed that Mr. Tate had submitted the grievance complaint against Defendant.

42. On June 21, 2022, Defendant sent e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager.

43. In the e-mails, Defendant told the landlord and apartment property manager that Mr. Tate was a danger to their female residents and implored the landlord and apartment property manager to eject him.

44. To support his request, Defendant told the landlord and apartment property manager that Ms. Christian had obtained an ex parte domestic violence protective order against Mr. Tate on June 17, 2022, and he attached portions of a notice and order from that case.

45. Defendant sent the e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and property manager to retaliate against Mr. Tate for initiating a grievance against him.

46. In the e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager, Defendant falsely claimed to be a concerned resident of the apartment complex.

47. Defendant knew that the representation in Paragraph 46 was false when he made it.

48. Defendant sent the e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager from an e-mail account that he assigned the fictitious name "Kevin Holcombe," with the address [holcombek46@gmail.com](mailto:holcombek46@gmail.com).

49. Defendant intentionally sent the e-mails using a fictitious name.

50. Defendant sent the e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager using a fictitious name and falsely claiming to be a resident to conceal his improper conduct and to deceive the landlord and property manager into ejecting Mr. Tate.

51. The fictitious "Kevin Holcombe" e-mail persona was also used to create a positive Google review of Defendant's law practice.

52. The review stated: "wish I could give 5 Stars."

53. The positive Google review was false or misleading in that it tended to lead the public to believe that an independent person named "Kevin Holcombe" had a positive experience with Defendant's professional services.

54. The State Bar opened an additional grievance investigation, bearing grievance file no. 22G0809 ("Grievance 22G0809"), against Defendant concerning his use of the fictitious "Kevin Holcombe" persona.

55. The State Bar served Defendant with a Letter of Notice in Grievance 22G0809 on August 14, 2022.

56. On September 12, 2022, Defendant responded to the Letter of Notice in Grievance 22G0809 by stating:

The only advertising that I have/had is a website that I pay/paid a monthly subscription to and the only site where I solicit/solicited business. I don't exercise control over the google listing, didn't put the google listing up and can't take the google listing down nor modify it. If anyone of the people who live with me left a review then that may be possible.

57. Defendant's response to the Letter of Notice in Grievance 22G0809 was a knowingly false statement of material fact in that Defendant owned and controlled the "Kevin Holcombe" account and could control the Google review.

58. Defendant intentionally did not disclose his ownership of the "Kevin Holcombe" account to the State Bar and intentionally mislead the State Bar about his connection to the account.

59. In response to further investigation, Defendant claimed that his wife, Michelle Meeks ("Mrs. Meeks"), had posted the fictitious Google review of his firm using the "Kevin Holcombe" account.

60. Mrs. Meeks later told the State Bar that she thought she had posted the fictitious Google review but was not "100% sure."

61. Mrs. Meeks further told the State Bar that she had informed Defendant that she posted the fictitious Google review of his firm and that he did not say anything in response.

62. Following his September 2022 response, the State Bar served Defendant with a subpoena to participate in an interview in the investigation of Grievance 22G0809 in October 2022.

63. During his October 2022 State Bar interview, Defendant blamed his wife, Mrs. Meeks, for sending the retaliatory e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager.

64. Defendant claimed Mrs. Meeks had sent the e-mails without his knowledge.

65. But Defendant also claimed that Mrs. Meeks had informed him of the e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager days after sending them, and he approved of her sending them.

66. Defendant's October 2022 interview statements blaming his wife for sending the retaliatory e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager without his knowledge were false.

67. Defendant knew that his statements blaming his wife for sending the retaliatory e-mails were false when he made them.

68. Following Defendant's statements in his October 2022 interview, the State Bar sought to communicate with Mrs. Meeks about her knowledge of the events for which Defendant claimed she was responsible.

69. Mrs. Meeks refused to voluntarily communicate with the State Bar.

70. Accordingly, the State Bar served Mrs. Meeks with a subpoena to participate in an interview in the investigation of Grievance 22G0809.

71. Mrs. Meeks attended the February 8, 2023 subpoenaed interview, accompanied by Defendant.

72. Moments before the interview began, Defendant told the State Bar that he would be acting as Mrs. Meeks' lawyer.

73. Defendant proceeded to advise Mrs. Meeks on how to respond (or refuse to respond) during the remainder of the time that the State Bar attempted to conduct the interview.

74. During the interview, Defendant instructed Mrs. Meeks to refuse to answer any questions and to instead assert a Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination and right to remain silent.

75. Further, Defendant explicitly announced that Mrs. Meeks would assert a Fifth Amendment refusal to answer any questions that the State Bar might ask.

76. As Defendant advised, Mrs. Meeks refused to answer a single question, regardless of its subject matter.

77. Defendant often prompted Mrs. Meeks to refuse to answer by tapping a yellow legal pad she held before her.

78. When asked during the interview, Defendant refused to state any factual basis for the objections.

79. When asked, Defendant also refused to answer the State Bar's question of whom he believed risked being incriminated by Mrs. Meeks answering the State Bar's interview questions.

80. The State Bar's investigation of Defendant contained no plausible implication of criminal conduct by Mrs. Meeks.

81. Answers to the areas of inquiry the State Bar sought to discuss with Mrs. Meeks created no plausible risk of criminal investigation, prosecution, or conviction of Mrs. Meeks.

82. The State Bar had no ability to impose any sanction on Mrs. Meeks, civil or criminal.

83. Defendant's objections lacked a non-frivolous basis in law and fact.

84. Defendant was materially limited in his representation of Mrs. Meeks during the February 2023 interview due to his personal interest in her not answering questions about his alleged misconduct—for which he had blamed her.

85. By instructing Mrs. Meeks to make patently frivolous objections to answering the State Bar's questions, and by himself asserting such frivolous objections on her behalf, Defendant foreseeably forced Mrs. Meeks to be subject to a subsequent injunctive action.

86. Defendant knew or reasonably should have known that he would not be able to competently and diligently represent Mrs. Meeks in her February 2023 interview.

87. Due to Mrs. Meeks' refusal to answer any questions during the subpoenaed interview—at Defendant's direction—the State Bar was forced to obtain an Injunction Enforcing Subpoena from the Wake County Superior Court to compel the interview information to which the State Bar was entitled.

88. The Wake County Superior Court found: "Mrs. Meeks' objections and refusal to answer the State Bar's questions, at Mr. Meeks' direction, were facially frivolous and without merit."

89. The Wake County Superior Court further held that the State Bar's subpoena to Mrs. Meeks should be enforced and ordered Mrs. Meeks to participate in a subsequent interview in the investigation of Grievance 22G0809 without assertion of meritless objections.

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Disciplinary Hearing Panel makes the following:

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. All parties are properly before the Hearing Panel, and the Hearing Panel has jurisdiction over Defendant and the subject matter of this proceeding.

2. Defendant failed to file any responsive pleading in this matter before his time to do so expired, and Defendant's default has been entered by the clerk of the Disciplinary Hearing Commission. The allegations of Plaintiff's First Amended Complaint are properly deemed admitted pursuant to Defendant's default.

3. Defendant's actions set forth above constitute grounds for discipline pursuant to N.C. Gen. Stat. § 84-28(b)(2) in that Defendant violated the Rules of Professional Conduct in effect at the time of the conduct as follows:

- a. By issuing the subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the Family Law Action, Defendant handled a legal matter that he knew or should have known he was not competent to handle without associating with a lawyer who was competent to handle the matter, in violation of Rule 1.1;
- b. By failing to inform Ms. Christian of the limitations on his ability to represent her, Defendant: failed to inform Ms. Christian of a decision or circumstance with respect to which her informed consent was required, in violation of Rule 1.4(a)(1); failed to consult with Ms. Christian about the relevant limitations on his conduct, in violation of Rule 1.4(a)(5); and failed to explain a matter to the extent reasonably necessary to permit Ms. Christian to make informed decisions regarding the representation, in violation of Rule 1.4(b);
- c. By representing Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action against Mr. Tate, Defendant undertook a representation that was materially limited by his responsibilities to his former client, Mr. Tate, in violation of Rule 1.7(a)(1);
- d. By representing Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action against Mr. Tate, after representing Ms. Christian and Mr. Tate in the protective order action, Defendant represented Ms. Christian in a substantially related matter in which Ms. Christian's interests were materially adverse to Mr. Tate, without Mr. Tate's written informed consent, in violation of Rule 1.9(a);
- e. By misrepresenting to TextNow his authority to issue a subpoena to it, Defendant: engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation that reflected adversely on his fitness as a lawyer, in violation of Rule 8.4(c); and engaged in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, in violation of Rule 8.4(d);
- f. By falsely indicating that he served TextNow with the subpoena via registered or certified mail, Defendant engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation that reflected adversely on his fitness as a lawyer, in violation of Rule 8.4(c);
- g. By failing to serve Mr. Tate with a copy of the subpoena or notify counsel of record for either party in the Family Law Action that he had issued this subpoena on Ms. Christian's behalf in the lawsuit, Defendant engaged in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, in violation of Rule 8.4(d).
- h. By sending the retaliatory emails under a false identity to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager for the purpose of having Mr. Tate ejected, Defendant: engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation that reflected adversely on his fitness as a lawyer, in violation

of Rule 8.4(c); and engaged in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice, in violation of Rule 8.4(d);

- i. By falsely representing to the State Bar in his initial response to the Letter of Notice in Grievance 22G0809 that he had no connection to or control over the Kevin Holcombe account, Defendant: knowingly made a false statement of material fact in connection with a disciplinary matter, in violation of Rule 8.1(a); and engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation that reflected adversely on his fitness as a lawyer, in violation of Rule 8.4(c);
- j. By falsely representing to the State Bar that Mrs. Meeks sent the retaliatory e-mails to Mr. Tate's landlord and apartment property manager without his knowledge, Defendant: knowingly made a false statement of material fact in connection with a disciplinary matter, in violation of Rule 8.1(a); and engaged in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, and misrepresentation that reflected adversely on his fitness as a lawyer, in violation of Rule 8.4(c);
- k. By representing Mrs. Meeks in her initial interview with the State Bar when his representation was materially limited by his personal interest in her not answering questions in the State Bar's investigation against him, Defendant engaged in a concurrent conflict of interest, in violation of Rule 1.7(a)(2); and
- l. By instructing Mrs. Meeks to assert frivolous objections and to refuse to answer the State Bar's interview questions, and by himself asserting such frivolous objections on her behalf, Defendant asserted or controverted issues in a proceeding without a non-frivolous basis in law and fact for doing so, in violation of Rule 3.1.

4. Defendant's actions set forth above constituted grounds for discipline under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 84-28(b)(3) in that Defendant made a knowing misrepresentation of facts and circumstances surrounding a complaint, allegation, or charge of misconduct before the State Bar.

Based upon the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and the additional evidence presented at the hearing, the Hearing Panel finds by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence the following:

#### **FINDINGS OF FACT REGARDING DISCIPLINE**

1. Defendant has substantial experience in the practice of law, having been licensed since 2007.
2. When Defendant represented Mr. Tate and Ms. Christian in the domestic violence action, he knew or should have known that Mr. Tate was entrusting him to treat the information he acquired during that representation confidential.

3. Defendant abused the trust and confidence Mr. Tate placed in him when he issued a subpoena directly adverse to Mr. Tate in the Family Law Action, reflecting a lack of trustworthiness.

4. It negatively impacts a client's and the public's perception of the legal profession when a lawyer abuses the trust and confidence a client places in him.

5. Mr. Tate felt betrayed by Defendant's actions in representing Ms. Christian, which Mr. Tate believed to be unethical.

6. When a lawyer issues a subpoena on behalf of a client in a court action, the lawyer exercises power entrusted to him as an officer of the court and has the special power to compel actions from third parties under the court's authority. It harms the profession and the administration of justice when a lawyer misuses the subpoena power or fails to comply with the requirements for exercising the same.

7. The law generally requires lawyers representing a party in a court proceeding to make an appearance in that proceeding before undertaking action therein on behalf of one of the partes. The court and counsel of record are likely to face surprise and hindrance in their respective responsibilities when unidentified lawyers who have not made an appearance take undisclosed actions to carry out formal discovery on behalf of a party. It harms the administration of justice when a lawyer behaves thusly.

8. Defendant's conduct caused significant harm to his former client, Mr. Tate, by:
- (a) violating the trust and confidence a client places in a lawyer when he purported to issue a subpoena directly adverse to Mr. Tate on behalf of Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action;
  - (b) failing to serve the TextNow subpoena to Mr. Tate, thereby depriving his former client of notice and the opportunity to be heard; and
  - (c) sending a deceptive, retaliatory e-mail making damaging accusations to Mr. Tate's landlord in an attempt to have Mr. Tate evicted.
9. Defendant caused harm to the administration of justice by:
- (a) not making an appearance in the Family Law Action;
  - (b) not notifying the counsel or parties in the Family Law Action that he was undertaking a representation of Ms. Christian therein;
  - (c) failing to serve the subpoena to TextNow upon the parties in the Family Law Action; and
  - (d) failing to notify Mr. Tate, Mr. Tate's counsel, Ms. Christian's counsel, or the court that he had issued the subpoena on behalf of Ms. Christian in the Family Law Action.

10. When a lawyer issues an unenforceable subpoena to a third party, as Defendant issued to TextNow, the lawyer misrepresents his authority to compel compliance from the third party and thereby imposes a negative effect on the third party.

11. Defendant caused harm to the profession and the administration of justice by: (a) sending an unenforceable subpoena to TextNow without disclosing that TextNow had no obligation to comply with it; (b) affirmatively misrepresenting to TextNow his authority to issue the subpoena to it; and (c) falsely indicating that he served TextNow with the subpoena via registered or certified mail. These actions created a likelihood of confusing the subpoena recipient about its obligations in the court action and about Defendant's role in the same.

12. It degrades the reputation of the legal profession when a lawyer publicly and wrongfully acts to harm his client or former client for reporting the lawyer's conduct to the State Bar.

13. When lawyers take retaliatory actions against clients or former clients who report grievance complaints to the State Bar, it creates a chilling effect on the reporting of misconduct and harms the administration of justice.

14. Mr. Tate felt that Defendant was retaliating against him and was seeking to ruin Mr. Tate's life by sending the deceitful e-mail to Mr. Tate's landlord and leasing agent.

15. Defendant's public retaliation against Mr. Tate (in his communications with third parties) for initiating a grievance complaint against him negatively impacted a client's and the public's perception of the legal profession and harmed the administration of justice.

16. Defendant's deceitful e-mail to Mr. Tate's landlord and leasing agent inherently had a negative effect on those third parties by putting the landlord and leasing agent in an undesirable position of deciding whether to act on Defendant's retaliatory efforts towards his former client.

17. While the State Bar investigated Defendant's misconduct in Grievance 22G0809, Defendant filed a lawsuit in the United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina against the State Bar's deputy counsel and investigator assigned to the investigation. The lawsuit was captioned *Eddie L. Meeks v. Robert Weston, et al.*, Case No. 3:23-CV-66-RJC (the "Federal Lawsuit").

18. In the Federal Lawsuit, Defendant sued the State Bar's deputy counsel and investigator in their individual capacities and sought compensatory and punitive damages in excess of \$1,000,000.00 for the stated purpose of deterring the deputy counsel and investigator's conduct.

19. The conduct about which Defendant complained in the Federal Lawsuit consisted entirely of the deputy counsel and investigator carrying out their regular investigatory responsibilities.

20. After filing the Federal Lawsuit, Defendant took no action to prosecute it further or to show that its claims had a non-frivolous basis in law and fact.

21. The court dismissed the Federal Lawsuit on a preliminary motion, to which Defendant failed to respond.

22. In dismissing the Federal Lawsuit, the court found:

(a) that Defendant “demonstrated a lack of personal responsibility and . . . deliberately proceeded in a dilatory fashion by failing to respond to the Motion to Dismiss;”

(b) that, because of Defendant’s dilatory conduct, “the prejudice to the [State Bar staff] is appreciable because [Defendant’s] claims remain pending, and [the State Bar staff] face the cost and considerable time in preparing a defense despite [Defendant] failing to respond or further prosecuting this lawsuit.”

23. Defendant filed the Federal Lawsuit on February 6, 2023.

24. Defendant filed the Federal Lawsuit very shortly after the State Bar served Mrs. Meeks on January 17, 2023, with a subpoena for an interview to test Defendant’s false statements blaming Mrs. Meeks for his misconduct in this action.

25. When the State Bar’s deputy counsel and investigator attended the February 8, 2023 subpoenaed interview of Mrs. Meeks, Defendant handed them copies of the Federal Lawsuit complaint, purporting to serve them with the same.

26. When the State Bar staff informed Defendant and Mrs. Meeks that a court order enforcing the subpoena would be necessary if Mrs. Meeks continued to assert frivolous Fifth Amendment objections to questions during her subpoenaed interview, Defendant responded by telling the State Bar staff that he would continue suing them for monetary damages.

27. Explicitly and implicitly, Defendant asserted the claims in the Federal Lawsuit against the State Bar staff for the purpose of deterring the State Bar from pursuing a valid investigation into allegations of his misconduct.

28. The State Bar staff were forced to engage defense counsel at the North Carolina Department of Justice due to Defendant’s assertion of claims against them in the Federal Lawsuit.

29. Defendant’s claims in the Federal Lawsuit were facially frivolous and without merit.

30. The State Bar staff and their counsel at the North Carolina Department of Justice were forced to expend valuable time and other resources as a result of Defendant’s assertion of facially meritless claims against them in the Federal Lawsuit.

31. It negatively impacts the public’s perception of the profession when a lawyer publicly files a frivolous lawsuit against State Bar employees to deter the State Bar from proceeding with a grievance investigation.

32. By falsely blaming Mrs. Meeks for his own misconduct, Defendant needlessly involved her as a third party in his disciplinary investigation.

33. Defendant's conduct in representing Mrs. Meeks at her February 8, 2023 subpoenaed interview and wrongfully instructing her to refuse to answer the State Bar's questions was designed to prevent or hinder the State Bar's investigation of the allegations of Defendant's misconduct. This conduct amounted to bad faith obstruction by Defendant of a valid subpoena issued by the Grievance Committee Chair under the State Bar's Discipline and Disability Rules.

34. Defendant's representation of Mrs. Meeks during the February 8, 2023 subpoenaed interview foreseeably had a negative effect on her as a third party in that it deprived her of competent, independent legal advice free from any conflict of interest and foreseeably subjected her to an injunctive action in the Wake County Superior Court.

35. By frivolously instructing Mrs. Meeks to assert the Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination to prevent her from providing information about his own conduct to the State Bar in its investigation against him, Defendant elevated his own interests over that of his client.

36. Defendant's representation of Mrs. Meeks during the February 8, 2023 subpoenaed interview foreseeably impaired the goals of the representation, as Mrs. Meeks was subjected to an additional injunctive action and subsequent subpoenaed interview in Raleigh, North Carolina.

37. The State Bar was forced to expend valuable time and other resources obtaining a court order as a result of Defendant's wrongful directions to Mrs. Meeks during the February 8, 2023 subpoenaed interview.

38. Defendant repeatedly behaved in a dilatory manner towards the State Bar's investigation, regularly providing incomplete information to the State Bar and missing deadlines to provide information without excuse. Defendant's dilatory conduct required the State Bar to expend valuable time and other resources repeatedly pursuing the same information from Defendant to advance its investigation.

39. An attorney's honesty with the State Bar is fundamental to the system of justice. The public relies on the legal profession to be largely self-governing. The administration of justice is compromised when attorneys are not candid and truthful with the State Bar in connection with disciplinary proceedings. When attorneys are dishonest with the State Bar, there is significant harm to the legal profession, the public's perception of the profession, as well as the potential for significant harm to clients.

40. Defendant engaged in repeated, intentional acts of dishonesty towards the State Bar during the State Bar's grievance investigations in Grievance 21G0825 and Grievance 22G0809.

41. These dishonest acts were intended to prevent or hinder the State Bar from discovering the truth of Defendant's misconduct during its grievance investigations.

42. Defendant's repeated dishonesty to the State Bar unnecessarily prolonged the State Bar's investigation in Grievance 21G0825 and Grievance 22G0809 and forced the State Bar to expend significant unnecessary resources.

43. In addition to the added unnecessary burden placed on the disciplinary investigation, Defendant's repeated dishonesty to the State Bar also caused significant harm to the administration of justice by obstructing the State Bar's ability to uncover the truth of the allegations being investigated.

44. Defendant has expressed a profound lack of remorse and a refusal to acknowledge the wrongful nature of his conduct, including through: (1) his retaliatory efforts against Mr. Tate; (2) his repeated dishonesty to the State Bar during the investigations in Grievance 21G0825 and Grievance 22G0809; and (3) his wrongful attempts to hinder the State Bar's investigation by filing the meritless Federal Lawsuit and by instructing Mrs. Meeks to refuse to comply with a lawful subpoena.

45. Defendant evidenced a significantly uncooperative attitude towards the disciplinary proceedings and has failed to participate at any stage of this action before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission.

46. Defendant's repeated dishonesty to the State Bar, dilatory tactics, and multiple efforts to prevent or hinder the State Bar's investigation amounted to multiple instances of failing to participate in—and actively thwarting—the legal profession's self-regulation process.

47. Defendant has received prior discipline. In 2017, Defendant accepted a reprimand from the North Carolina State Bar in connection with grievance file numbers 16G0101, 16G0148, and 16G0207 for lacking diligence, failing to return unearned fees, and failing to protect his clients' interests upon withdrawal. The misconduct at issue occurred between 2015 and 2016.

48. On November 5, 2024, Defendant filed a motion to withdraw from a representation in a criminal matter in Cleveland County Superior Court, asserting that he ceased practicing law effective November 1, 2024.

49. Defendant has not acknowledged the wrongful nature of his conduct.

50. Defendant's refusal to participate in this disciplinary proceeding before the DHC results in potential significant harm to the profession and to the public. The legal profession is entrusted with the privilege of self-regulation. The State Bar can only regulate the profession if its members respond to inquiries of the State Bar and otherwise participate in the self-regulatory process. Defendant's failure to participate in this disciplinary proceeding shows an unacceptable disregard for the regulatory authority of the State Bar and of this tribunal. Defendant's refusal to participate in this process impedes effective self-regulation and jeopardizes the privilege of the profession to remain self-regulating.

Based upon the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law determined in the Misconduct Order, as well as the Additional Findings of Fact Regarding Discipline above, and upon consideration of the factors set forth in 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0116(f), the Hearing Panel enters the following:

## CONCLUSIONS REGARDING DISCIPLINE

1. All parties are properly before the Hearing Panel, and the Hearing Panel has jurisdiction over Defendant and the subject matter of this proceeding.

2. The Hearing Panel carefully considered all of the different forms of discipline available to it.

3. The Hearing Panel considered all of the factors enumerated in 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0116(f).

4. The Hearing Panel concludes that the following factors from 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0116(f)(1), which are to be considered in imposing suspension or disbarment, are present in this case:

- a. Factor (A), intent of Defendant to cause the resulting harm or potential harm;
- b. Factor (B), intent of Defendant to commit acts where the harm or potential harm is foreseeable;
- c. Factor (C), circumstances reflecting Defendant's lack of honesty, trustworthiness, or integrity;
- d. Factor (D), elevation of Defendant's own interest above that of the client;
- e. Factor (E), negative impact of Defendant's actions on client's and public's perception of the profession;
- f. Factor (F), negative impact of Defendant's actions on the administration of justice;
- g. Factor (G), impairment of the client's ability to achieve the goals of the representation;
- h. Factor (H), effect of Defendant's conduct on third parties;
- i. Factor (I), acts of misrepresentation; and
- j. Factor (J), multiple instances of failure to participate in the legal profession's self-regulation process.

5. The Hearing Panel considered the factors listed in 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0116(f)(2), which if found would warrant consideration of disbarment, and determined that the following factors were present:

- a. Factor (A), acts of dishonesty, misrepresentation, deceit, or fabrication; and

- b. Factor (B), impulsive acts of dishonesty, misrepresentation, deceit, or fabrication without timely remedial efforts.

6. The Hearing Panel concludes that the following factors from 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0116(f)(3), which are to be considered in all cases, are present in this case:

- a. Factor (A), prior disciplinary offenses in the state of North Carolina;
- b. Factor (B), lack of remoteness of prior offenses;
- c. Factor (C), dishonest or selfish motive;
- d. Factor (D), failure to timely make a good faith effort to rectify consequences of misconduct;
- e. Factor (G), multiple offenses;
- f. Factor (K), failure to make any disclosure to the hearing panel, and lack of a cooperative attitude toward the proceedings;
- g. Factor (M), bad faith obstruction of the disciplinary proceedings by intentionally failing to comply with rules or orders of the disciplinary agency;
- h. Factor (N), submission of false statements during the disciplinary process;
- i. Factor (O), refusal to acknowledge wrongful nature of conduct;
- j. Factor (P), absence of remorse; and
- k. Factor (S), significant degree of experience in the practice of law.

7. The Hearing Panel considered all of the disciplinary options available to it and determined that disbarment is appropriate and necessary in this case in light of the significant harm caused by Defendant's conduct to his client, the profession, and the administration of justice. Discipline short of disbarment would not be sufficient because of the gravity of actual and potential harm Defendant's conduct caused to the client, the public, the administration of justice, and the legal profession, as well as the threat of potential significant harm Defendant poses to the public.

8. The Hearing Panel has considered all lesser sanctions and finds that discipline short of disbarment would not adequately protect the public for the following reasons:

- a. Defendant has been disciplined previously for professional misconduct. The written discipline he previously received was not effective in preventing subsequent transgressions by Defendant;

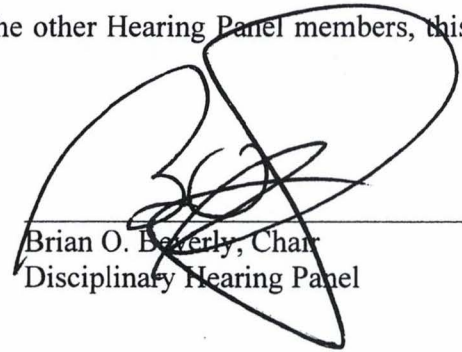
- b. Defendant has failed to admit to the wrongful nature of his conduct and has given the Hearing Panel no assurance that he would not engage in future violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct;
- c. Defendant's failure to respond to this disciplinary action or answer for the allegations of his misconduct therein reflects a disregard for the disciplinary process and the self-governance of the legal profession such that there is inadequate assurance that discipline short of disbarment would provide a sufficient deterrent effect on future misconduct by Defendant;
- d. Entry of an order imposing less serious discipline would fail to acknowledge the seriousness of the offenses Defendant committed and would send the wrong message to attorneys and the public regarding the conduct expected of members of the Bar of this State.

Based on the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law in the Misconduct Order, and the additional Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law Regarding Discipline set forth herein, the Hearing Panel hereby enters the following

#### **ORDER OF DISCIPLINE**

1. Defendant, Eddie L. Meeks, is hereby DISBARRED from the practice of law.
2. Defendant shall pay the administrative fees and costs of this proceeding as assessed by the Secretary of the North Carolina State Bar. Defendant must pay the costs within 30 days of the State Bar mailing the statement of costs to Defendant at the address on file with the State Bar Membership Department.
3. Defendant shall surrender his law license and membership card to the Secretary of the North Carolina State Bar no later than 30 days following service of this Order upon Defendant.
4. Within 15 days of the effective date of this Order, Defendant shall provide the State Bar with an address and telephone number at which clients seeking return of files can communicate with Defendant and obtain such files. The address must be a physical address at which Defendant maintains a consistent presence and receives mail. Defendant must keep this information current with the State Bar, providing updated information to the State Bar within 15 days of any change.
5. Defendant shall promptly return client files in his possession, custody, or control to clients upon request, within 5 days of receipt of such request. Defendant will be deemed to have received any such request 3 days after the date such request is sent to Defendant if the request is sent to the address Defendant provided the State Bar pursuant to the preceding paragraph or to Defendant's address of record with the State Bar if Defendant fails to provide another address pursuant to the preceding paragraph.
6. Defendant shall comply with all provisions of 27 N.C. Admin. Code 1B.0128 as set out therein.

Signed by the Chair with the consent of the other Hearing Panel members, this the 29th day of April, 2025.



Brian O. Beverly, Chair  
Disciplinary Hearing Panel