

NORTH CAROLINA
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE THE
GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE
OF THE
NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR
17G1034

IN THE MATTER OF)	
)	REPRIMAND
SONYA L. WHITAKER,)	
ATTORNEY AT LAW)	

On April 19, 2018 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by the North Carolina State Bar. The grievance was assigned to a Subcommittee, which thoroughly reviewed the results of the State Bar staff's investigation of this matter.

Pursuant to Section .0113(a) of the Discipline and Disability Rules of the North Carolina State Bar, the Grievance Subcommittee conducted a preliminary hearing. After considering the information available to it, including your response to the letter of notice, the Grievance Subcommittee found probable cause. Probable cause is defined in the rules as "reasonable cause to believe that a member of the North Carolina State Bar is guilty of misconduct justifying disciplinary action."

The rules provide that after a finding of probable cause, the Grievance Committee may determine that the filing of a complaint and a hearing before the Disciplinary Hearing Commission are not required, and the Grievance Committee may issue various levels of discipline depending upon the misconduct, the actual or potential injury caused, and any aggravating or mitigating factors. The Grievance Committee may issue an admonition, a reprimand, or a censure to the respondent attorney.

A reprimand is a written form of discipline more serious than an admonition issued in cases in which an attorney has violated one or more provisions of the Rules of Professional Conduct and has caused harm or potential harm to a client, the administration of justice, the profession, or a member of the public, but the misconduct does not require a censure.

The Grievance Committee was of the opinion that a censure is not required in this case and issues this reprimand to you. As chairman of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is now my duty to issue this reprimand.

You filed a reinstatement petition from an Administrative Suspension of your law license. On the petition you answered that you did not have any disciplinary complaints, investigations, or actions pending before a professional licensing organization. In fact, you were aware that State Bar Grievance 17G0026 was pending and under investigation at the time. You received notice of that grievance on April 28, 2017. Over the next several months the Bar repeatedly requested

information from you in reference to the grievance, but you did not comply until after filing the petition for reinstatement. When questioned about the statement on the reinstatement petition, you claimed you did not know 17G0026 was a grievance. This was disingenuous as you had clear notice that it was a grievance. You therefore made a false statement to the Administrative Committee of the State Bar. You violated Rules 8.1(a) and 8.4(c).

You are hereby reprimanded by the North Carolina State Bar for your professional misconduct. The Grievance Committee trusts that you will heed this reprimand, that it will be remembered by you, that it will be beneficial to you, and that you will never again allow yourself to depart from adherence to the high ethical standards of the legal profession.

In accordance with the policy adopted July 23, 2010 by the Council of the North Carolina State Bar regarding the taxing of administrative fees and investigative costs to any attorney issued a reprimand by the Grievance Committee, an administrative fee in the amount of \$350.00 is hereby taxed to you.

Done and ordered, this the 30th day of May, 2018.


DeWitt "Mac" McCarley, Chair
Grievance Committee

DM/lb