

NORTH CAROLINA  
WAKE COUNTY

BEFORE  
THE GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE  
OF  
THE NORTH CAROLINA STATE BAR  
23G0167

---

IN THE MATTER OF	)	
	)	REPRIMAND
ASSATA KIMBROUGH BUFFALOE,	)	
ATTORNEY AT LAW	)	

---

On January 23, 2025 the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar met and considered the grievance filed against you by S.H. 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."

Having found probable cause exists in your matter, the Grievance Committee next considered what level of discipline is most appropriate in your matter based upon all of the facts, the nature of the misconduct, the actual or potential injury caused and any aggravating or mitigating factors. After further discussion and deliberation, the Grievance Committee determined the conduct before it merited discipline at the level of reprimand.

A reprimand is a written form of discipline issued where an attorney is determined to have 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 protection of the public does not require a censure.

As Chair of the Grievance Committee of the North Carolina State Bar, it is my duty to issue this reprimand.

In 2021, S.H. hired you to help with her mother's estate. S.H. believed you were handling all aspects of the administration of the estate. You believed S.H. hired you to obtain Letters of Administration for S.H. The court authorized Letters of Administration to S.H. in July 2021, and you believed the representation was complete but did not notify S.H. In February 2022, S.H. contacted your firm and spoke with your assistant after S.H. received notices to file an inventory. Your assistant advised that S.H. would need to pay \$188.00 to publish the notice to creditors. Soon thereafter, you asked the Clerk of Court to add you as the attorney for the estate and you prepared and filed the inventory, and your assistant accepted \$188.00 from S.H. to publish a notice to creditors in the newspaper. However, you did not publish the notice to creditors and did not inform

S.H. you were not publishing the notice to creditors. Rather, you kept the \$188.00 of S.H.'s funds as payment for preparing and filing the inventory. Between February and November 2022, S.H. received Notices and Orders to File, and Orders to Show Cause for Failure to File. You did not respond to S.H.'s communications concerning the Notices and Orders, and you did not notify S.H. when you closed your practice in February 2023.


The Grievance Committee determined you failed to act with reasonable diligence by neglecting to clarify the scope of the representation in violation of Rule 1.3. You also failed to keep your client informed about the status of the matter in violation of Rule 1.4(a)(3) and did not respond to reasonable requests for information in violation of Rule 1.4(a)(4). By not publishing the notice to creditors but keeping the payment to do so, you unilaterally paid to yourself funds held in trust for another purpose in violation of Rule 1.15-2(I), and you failed to return an advance payment of an expense that had not been incurred in violation of Rule 1.16(d).

Accordingly, you are hereby reprimanded by the North Carolina State Bar for your professional misconduct consisting of the cited violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct. 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.

If you accept this reprimand, it will be maintained as a record in the judgment book of the North Carolina State Bar and a copy will be sent to the complainant. Please review carefully the details set forth in the formal Notice of Reprimand attached.

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 20<sup>th</sup> day of February, 2025.

  
Charles Gordon Brown, Chair  
Grievance Committee

CGB/jms