FILED
May 28, 2025
Disciplinary Board

Docket # 003

DISCIPLINARY BOARD
WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Notice of Reprimand

Lawyer Louis Hunter, WSBA No. 43818, has been ordered Reprimanded by the following attached documents: Stipulation to Reprimand, Order on Stipulation to Reprimand.

WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

Szilvia Szilágyi
Counsel to the Disciplinary Board

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I caused a copy of the Notice of Reprimand to be emailed to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to Respondent, Louis Hunter, at hunter.louis@gmail.com, on the 28th day of May, 2025.

____

Clerk to the Disciplinary Board

FILED
May 21, 2025
Disciplinary
Board

Docket # 002

DISCIPLINARY BOARD
WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re **LOUIS HUNTER,** Lawyer (Bar No. 43818).	Proceeding No. 25#0036 ODC File No(s). 22-00604 STIPULATION TO REPRIMAND

Under Rule 9.1 of the Washington Supreme Court's Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct (ELC), the following Stipulation to reprimand is entered into by the Office of Disciplinary Counsel (ODC) of the Washington State Bar Association (Association) through disciplinary counsel Kathy Jo Blake, Respondent's Counsel Anne I. Seidel and Respondent lawyer Louis Hunter.

Respondent understands that Respondent is entitled under the ELC to a hearing, to present exhibits and witnesses on Respondent's behalf, and to have a hearing officer determine the facts, misconduct and sanction in this case. Respondent further understands that Respondent is entitled under the ELC to appeal the outcome of a hearing to the Disciplinary Board, and, in certain cases, the Supreme Court. Respondent further understands that a hearing and appeal could result in an outcome more favorable or less favorable to Respondent. Respondent chooses to resolve this

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proceeding now by entering into the following stipulation to facts, misconduct and sanction to avoid the risk, time, expense attendant to further proceedings.

I. ADMISSION TO PRACTICE

1. Respondent was admitted to practice law in the State of Washington on June 20, 2011.

II. STIPULATED FACTS

2. Respondent maintained a trust account at Chase Bank ending in x9533 for the deposit of client funds. On June 1, 2022, prior to this grievance being filed, the account had a balance of $1,009,857.05. Many of the funds were stale; numerous clients and third parties had funds that had been held for over a year.

3. Between December 1, 2020, up through and including July 31, 2022, Respondent did not keep a client ledger or check register for funds held in x9533.

4. Between December 1, 2020, up through and including July 31, 2022, Respondent did not perform any trust account reconciliations.

5. Promptly after this grievance was filed, Respondent hired a bookkeeper, reconstructed the trust account records, began keeping current client ledgers and a current check register.

6. On five or more occasions between December 1, 2020, up through and including July 31, 2022, Respondent held funds belonging to more than one client and/or third parties for periods of longer than one year and did not provide clients and/or third parties with annual written accountings for funds held in trust.

7. On five or more occasions between December 1, 2020, up through and including July 31, 2022, Respondent failed to withdraw Respondent's earned fees from x9533 at the earliest reasonable time. Some of Respondent's earned fees remained in the trust account for years longer than necessary.

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8. On five or more occasions between December 1, 2020, up through and including July 31, 2022, Respondent failed to promptly disburse funds owed to clients and third parties.

9. On five or more occasions between December 1, 2020, up through and including July 31, 2022, Respondent failed to take prompt action to resolve disputed funds in trust related to reimbursement owed to insurance companies and/or medical providers.

10. Prior to this stipulation being signed, Respondent disbursed all of the stale funds owed to Respondent to Respondent and issued checks to clients and third parties with stale funds in trust.

III. STIPULATION TO MISCONDUCT

11. By failing to promptly deliver funds to clients and third persons that they were entitled to receive, and/or to take reasonable action to resolve any disputes, Respondent violated RPC 1.15A(f), RPC 1.15A(g) and RPC 1.3.

12. By commingling Hunter's own funds with client funds in a trust account, Respondent violated RPC 1.15A(h)(1) and/or RPC 1.15A(c).

13. By failing to provide clients and/or third parties with written annual accountings, Respondent violated RPC 1.15A(e).

14. By failing to maintain client ledgers, Respondent violated RPC 1.15B(a)(2).

15. By failing to maintain a check register, Respondent violated RPC 1.15B(a)(1).

16. By failing to perform any trust account reconciliations, Respondent violated RPC 1.15A(h)(6).

IV. PRIOR DISCIPLINE

17. Respondent has no prior discipline.

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V. APPLICATION OF ABA STANDARDS

18. The following American Bar Association Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions (1991 ed. & Feb. 1992 Supp.) apply to this case

4.1 ***Failure to Preserve the Client's Property***

4.11 Disbarment is generally appropriate when a lawyer knowingly converts client property and causes injury or potential injury to a client.

4.12 Suspension is generally appropriate when a lawyer knows or should know that he is dealing improperly with client property and causes injury or potential injury to a client.

4.13 Reprimand is generally appropriate when a lawyer is negligent in dealing with client property and causes injury or potential injury to a client.

4.14 Admonition is generally appropriate when a lawyer is negligent in dealing with client property and causes little or no actual or potential injury to a client.

19. Respondent knew or should have known that Respondent was dealing improperly with client and third-party funds.

20. Client and third parties suffered actual injury because they were deprived of funds to which they were entitled for prolonged periods of time. Clients and third parties also suffered potential injury because by failing to keep required records and perform required bank reconciliations, Respondent failed to catch potential bank errors, Respondent's own errors, or other problems. Additionally, by commingling Respondent's own funds with client funds in trust, Respondent made all funds in trust vulnerable to Respondent's potential creditors.

21. The presumptive sanction is suspension.

22. The following aggravating factors apply under ABA Standard 9.22:

(c) a pattern of misconduct;

(d) multiple offenses; and

(i) substantial experience in the practice of law [licensed in Washington since 2011].

23. The following mitigating factors apply under ABA Standard 9.32:

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(a) absence of prior disciplinary record;

(b) absence of dishonest or selfish motive;

(d) timely good faith effort to make restitution or to rectify the consequences of misconduct; and

(*l*) remorse.

24. It is an additional mitigating factor that Respondent has agreed to resolve this matter before the filing of the formal complaint.

25. Based on the factors set forth above, the presumptive sanction should be mitigated to reprimand.

VI. STIPULATED DISCIPLINE

26. The parties stipulate that Respondent shall receive a reprimand for Respondent's conduct.

27. Respondent will be subject to probation for a period of two years commencing upon final approval of this stipulation, with periodic reviews under ELC 13.8 of their trust account practices, and must comply with the specific probation terms set forth below:

a) Respondent shall carefully review and fully comply with RPC 1.15A and RPC 1.15B, and shall carefully review the current version of the publication, Managing Client Trust Accounts: Rules, Regulations, and Common Sense.

b) For all client matters, Respondent shall have a written fee agreement signed by the client, which agreements are to be maintained for least seven years (see RPC 1.15B(a)(3)).

c) On a monthly basis, using ODC's form report entitled "Monthly Reconciliation and Review Report," Respondent shall review the trust-account records detailed on the form report, review the completed report, and sign and date the completed report.

d) On a quarterly basis, Respondent shall provide ODC's audit staff with all trust-account records for the time period to be reviewed by ODC's audit staff and disciplinary counsel for compliance with the RPC:

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i) Months 1 – 3. By no later than the 30th day of the fourth month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the date of commencement of probation to the end of the third full month.

ii) Months 4 – 6. By no later than the 30th day of the seventh month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the end of the previously provided quarter through the end of month six.

iii) Months 7 – 9. By no later than the 30th day of the tenth month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the end of the previously provided quarter through the end of month nine.

iv) Months 10 – 12. By no later than the 30th day of the thirteenth month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the end of the previously provided quarter through the end of month twelve.

v) Months 13 – 15. By no later than the 30th day of the sixteenth month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the end of the previously provided quarter through the end of month fifteen.

vi) Months 16 – 18. By no later than the 30th day of the nineteenth month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the end of the previously provided quarter through the end of month eighteen.

vii) Months 19 – 21. By no later than the 30th day of the twenty-second month after the commencement of probation, Respondent shall provide the trust account records from the end of the previously provided quarter through the end of month twenty-one.

The trust account records Respondent provides to ODC for each quarterly review of Respondent's trust account will include: (a) copies of each completed "Monthly Reconciliation and Review Report" referenced in sub-paragraph(c) above, (b) a complete checkbook register for Respondent's trust account covering the period being reviewed, (c) complete individual client ledger records for any client with funds in Respondent's trust account during all or part of the period being reviewed, as well as for Respondent's own funds in the account (if any), and (d) copies of all trust-account bank statements, deposit slips, and cancelled checks covering the period being reviewed. ODC's Audit Manager or designee will review Respondent's trust account records for each period.

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e) On the same quarterly time schedule set forth in the preceding paragraph, Respondent will provide ODC's Audit Manager or designee with copies of any and all fee agreements entered into within the time period at issue.

f) ODC's Audit Manager or designee may request additional financial or client records if needed to verify Respondent's compliance with RPC 1.15A and/or 1.15B. Within twenty days of a request from ODC's Audit Manager or designee for additional records needed to verify Respondent's compliance with RPC 1.15A and/or RPC 1.15B, Respondent will provide ODC's Audit Manager or designee the additional records requested.

g) Respondent will reimburse the Association for time spent by ODC's Audit Manager or designee in reviewing and reporting on Respondent's records to determine their compliance with RPC 1.15A and RPC 1.15B, at the rate of $85 per hour. Respondent will make payment within thirty days of each written invoice setting forth the auditor's time and payment due.

VII. RESTITUTION

28. No restitution is required.

VIII. COSTS AND EXPENSES

29. In light of Respondent's willingness to resolve this matter by stipulation at an early stage of the proceedings, Respondent shall pay attorney fees and administrative costs of $750 in accordance with ELC 13.9(i). The Association will seek a money judgment under ELC 13.9(*l*) if these costs are not paid within 30 days of approval of this stipulation.

IX. VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT

30. Respondent states that prior to entering into this Stipulation Respondent has consulted independent legal counsel regarding this Stipulation, that Respondent is entering into this Stipulation voluntarily, and that no promises or threats have been made by ODC, the Association, nor by any representative thereof, to induce the Respondent to enter into this Stipulation except as provided herein.

31. Once fully executed, this stipulation is a contract governed by the legal principles applicable to contracts, and may not be unilaterally revoked or modified by either party.

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X. LIMITATIONS

32. This Stipulation is a compromise agreement intended to resolve this matter in accordance with the purposes of lawyer discipline while avoiding further proceedings and the expenditure of additional resources by the Respondent and ODC. Both the Respondent and ODC acknowledge that the result after further proceedings in this matter might differ from the result agreed to herein.

33. This Stipulation is not binding upon ODC or the respondent as a statement of all existing facts relating to the professional conduct of the Respondent, and any additional existing facts may be proven in any subsequent disciplinary proceedings.

34. This Stipulation results from the consideration of various factors by both parties, including the benefits to both by promptly resolving this matter without the time and expense of hearings, Disciplinary Board appeals, and Supreme Court appeals or petitions for review. As such, approval of this Stipulation will not constitute precedent in determining the appropriate sanction to be imposed in other cases; but, if approved, this Stipulation will be admissible in subsequent proceedings against Respondent to the same extent as any other approved Stipulation.

35. Under ELC 3.1(b), all documents that form the record before the Hearing Officer for the Hearing Officer's review become public information on approval of the Stipulation by the Hearing Officer, unless disclosure is restricted by order or rule of law.

36. If this Stipulation is approved by the Hearing Officer, it will be followed by the disciplinary action agreed to in this Stipulation. All notices required in the Rules for Enforcement of Lawyer Conduct will be made. Respondent represents that, in addition to Washington, Respondent also is admitted to practice law in the following jurisdictions, whether current status is active, inactive, or suspended: Oregon.

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37. If this Stipulation is not approved by the Hearing Officer, this Stipulation will have no force or effect, and neither it nor the fact of its execution will be admissible as evidence in the pending disciplinary proceeding, in any subsequent disciplinary proceeding, or in any civil or criminal action.

WHEREFORE the undersigned being fully advised, adopt and agree to this Stipulation to Reprimand as set forth above.

Louis Hunter, Bar No. 43818
Respondent

Dated: 5/14/25

Anne I. Seidel, Bar No. 22742
Counsel for Respondent

Dated: 5/14/25

Kathy Jo Blake, Bar No. 29235
Managing Disciplinary Counsel

Dated: *May 15, 2025*

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FILED

May 16, 2025

Disciplinary Board

Docket # 001

DISCIPLINARY BOARD
WASHINGTON STATE BAR ASSOCIATION

In re **LOUIS HUNTER**, Lawyer (Bar No. 43818).	Proceeding No. 25#00036 ORDER ON STIPULATION TO REPRIMAND

On review of the May 15, 2025 Stipulation to Reprimand,

IT IS ORDERED that the May 15, 2025 Stipulation to Reprimand is approved.

Dated this 15th day of May, 2025.

Randolph O. Petgrave
Randolph O. Petgrave
Chief Hearing Officer

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I caused a copy of the Order on Stipulation to Reprimand to be emailed to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel and to Respondent, Louis Hunter, at hunter.louis@gmail.com, on the 16th day of May, 2025.

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Clerk to the Disciplinary Board