

**BEFORE THE DISCIPLINARY BOARD OF THE
SUPREME COURT OF PENNSYLVANIA**

OFFICE OF DISCIPLINARY COUNSEL,	:	No. 2 DB 2025
Petitioner	:	
	:	
	:	
v.	:	
	:	Attorney Reg. No. 2566
LEE MANDELL,	:	
Respondent	:	(Philadelphia)

PUBLIC REPRIMAND

Lee Mandell, you appear before the Disciplinary Board for the imposition of a Public Reprimand ordered by the Board on January 28, 2025. The Board further ordered that you comply with a condition to communicate with your client and the Philadelphia Bar Association Fee Dispute Committee that you will submit to binding arbitration before the Committee. By letter dated January 28, 2025, the Board notified you of the disposition of this matter and further notified you of your opportunity to demand as of right the institution of formal charges within twenty days of the date of notification. You did not demand the institution of formal charges; therefore, you accept this public reprimand. We further note that by letter dated February 3, 2025, received by the Board on February 10, 2025, you demonstrated compliance with the condition of your reprimand.

It is an unpleasant task to publicly reprimand one who has been granted the privilege of membership in the bar of the Commonwealth. Yet as repugnant as this task may be, it has been found necessary that you receive this public discipline.

Attorney Mandell, the record demonstrates that you engaged in misconduct in two client matters. In the Ryan Devine matter, Devine was found guilty of third-degree

murder and other charges and sentenced in December of 2008 to imprisonment of 16 to 32 years. In April of 2011, you were appointed to represent Devine in his PCRA matter. You failed to ensure that an evidentiary hearing was promptly held. Devine had requested the hearing because a witness for the prosecution had recanted her trial testimony and a witness previously unknown to Devine at the time of trial could offer testimony as to Devine's innocence. You allowed six years to lapse before the District Attorney's office advised you and the court that it had no objection to an evidentiary hearing. The passage of time was consequential because the two witnesses died in 2021 and 2022, respectively.

In the Michael Haley matter, you previously represented Haley in a 1985 criminal case where Haley entered a plea of guilty to the offense of robbery and was sentenced to one year in prison. Sometime in 2019, Haley's brother paid you \$800 in cash because Haley was interested in seeking partial expungement of the charges and having the robbery conviction graded as a felony of the third degree rather than the first degree. You did not provide Haley or his brother with a written fee agreement. Apparently no action was taken and in February of 2023, Haley's daughter paid you \$1,500 in cash for the purpose of filing a motion to have Haley's robbery conviction graded as a felony of the third degree rather than the first degree. Again, you did not provide Haley or his daughter with a written fee agreement. During the time frame of the representation, you failed to promptly respond to your client's written and telephonic requests for information. In April of 2024, Haley sent you a letter and stated, among other things, that since you had received \$1,500 from his daughter in 2023, you had not provided Haley with any legal services. Haley requested a refund of the \$1,500 as well as the \$800 paid to you by Haley's brother in 2019. You admitted receiving the monies

but claimed you earned the fees. You offered to return \$500, but Haley rejected that offer and filed a fee dispute petition with the Philadelphia Bar Association Fee Dispute Committee.

By your conduct, you violated the following Rules of Professional Conduct (“RPC”):

1. RPC 1.1 – A lawyer shall provide competent representation to a client.
2. RPC 1.3 – A lawyer shall act with reasonable diligence and promptness in representing a client.
3. RPC 1.4(a)(4) – A lawyer shall promptly comply with reasonable requests for information.
4. RPC 1.5(b) – Where the lawyer has not regularly represented the client, the basis or rate of the fee shall be communicated to the client, in writing, before or within a reasonable time after commencing the representation.
5. RPC 3.2 – A lawyer shall make reasonable efforts to expedite litigation consistent with the interests of the client.

We note several mitigating factors in this matter: you have no record of discipline, you returned Devine’s file to successor counsel, and you filed amended and supplemental PCRA petitions in Devine’s matter. In aggravation, we note the delay in attending to Devine’s matter, which caused prejudice due to the unavailability of two witnesses by their deaths.

Attorney Mandell, your conduct in this matter is public. This Public Reprimand is a matter of public record and shall be posted on the Disciplinary Board's website at www.padisciplinaryboard.org.

It is the Board's duty to reprimand you for your misconduct. Please be aware that any subsequent violations on your part can only result in further discipline and more severe sanctions. We sincerely hope that you will conduct yourself in such a manner that future disciplinary action will be unnecessary.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Celeste Dee". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Designated Member
The Disciplinary Board of the
Supreme Court of Pennsylvania

Administered by a designated panel of three Members of The Disciplinary Board of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania on March 27, 2025.