# IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA (Before a Grievance Committee)

The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Complainant,

v.

PEDRO ALEJANDRO GONZALEZ,

Respond	lent.
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GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE FINDING OF NON-COMPLIANCE AND FAILURE TO RESPOND TO OFFICIAL BAR INQUIRY AND CONTEMPT

On September 22, 2023, pursuant to Rule 3-7.11(f), Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee M considered whether to issue a Finding of Non-Compliance and Failure to Respond to Official Bar Inquiry and Finding of Contempt and made the following findings:

- 1. On April 12, 2023, The Florida Bar sent respondent a letter by regular U.S. Mail to Respondent's record Bar address advising of a complaint in this case and requested a response by April 27, 2023. A copy of the letter is attached hereto as "Exhibit A".
- 2. Respondent failed to respond to The Florida Bar as requested in the letter of April 12, 2023.
- 3. On May 3, 2023, respondent was sent another letter, by regular U.S. Mail to respondent's record bar address, advising of a complaint in this case and **"Exhibit 1"**

requested a response in ten days. A copy of the letter is attached hereto as "Exhibit B".

- 4. Respondent requested an extension of time to respond. A 10-day extension was granted until May 25, 2023. A copy of the email from respondent is attached hereto as "Exhibit C".
- 5. On May 25, 2023, respondent requested a second 20-day extension due to illness. A copy of the email from respondent is attached hereto as "Exhibit D".
- 6. On June 9, 2023, Respondent was sent another letter, by regular U.S. Mail to respondent's record bar address, advising that a response has not been received and a response was requested by June 19, 2023. A copy of the letter is attached hereto as "Exhibit E".
- 7. On June 28, 2023, respondent was sent another letter, via email to respondent's record bar email address, advising that a response has not been received and a response was requested by July 10, 2023. A copy of the letter is attached hereto as "Exhibit F".
- 8. Respondent requested another extension of time to respond. An extension was granted until July 31, 2023. A copy of the email sent to respondent is attached hereto as "Exhibit G".

- 9. Respondent was given notice on August 2, 2023, that the Eleventh Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee M would hold a hearing on the Request for Issuance of Notice of Non-Compliance and Finding of Contempt. A copy of the Notice of Hearing and the Request for Issuance of Notice of Non-Compliance and Finding of Contempt are attached hereto as "Exhibit H".
- 10. Respondent made no response to the Request for Issuance of Notice of Non-Compliance and Finding of Contempt.
- 11. As of the date of this Request for Issuance of Notice of Non-Compliance and Finding of Contempt, respondent has failed to respond to the official bar inquiries dated April 12, 2023, May 3, 2023, June 9, 2023, June 28, 2023, and July 11, 2023.
- 12. The Grievance Committee found that Respondent failed to show good cause for failing to respond to the official Bar inquiries and that the non-compliance was willful.
- 13. The Grievance Committee found respondent to be in contempt and requested The Florida Bar to file a Petition for Contempt and Order to Show Cause with the Supreme Court.

Dated this	5	day of	October	, 2023.
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Eleventh Judicial Circuit Grievance Committee "M"

/s/ Caycie Flitman

Caycie B. Flitman, Presiding Chair

## **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I certify that the original hereof has been furnished by United States Postal Service Certified Mail Tracking No. 7014 2120 0003 5157 1296, Return Receipt Requested to, Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez, 1200 Brickell Avenue, Suite 950, Miami, FL 33131-3255 and via e-mail to <a href="mailto:pgonzalez@smgqlaw.com">pgonzalez@smgqlaw.com</a>; and copies to Jorge Luis Piedra, Designated Reviewer, via e-mail at <a href="mailto:pjedra@kttlaw.com">pjedra@kttlaw.com</a>; and to Patricia Ann Toro Savitz, Staff Counsel, The Florida Bar, e-mail at <a href="mailto:psavitz@floridabar.org">psavitz@floridabar.org</a>, this <a href="mailto:psavitz@floridabar.org">5th</a> day of October, 2023.

Rita Florez, Bar Counsel

Ditela-

Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300 Joshua E. Doyle Executive Director

850/561-5600 www.FLORIDABAR.org

April 12, 2023

Mr. Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez 1200 Brickell Ave Ste 950 Miami, FL 33131-3255

Re: Complaint by Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje against Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez

The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

Enclosed is a copy of an inquiry/complaint and any supporting documents submitted by the above referenced complainant(s). Your response to this complaint is required under the provisions of Rule 4-8.4(g), Rules of Professional Conduct of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, and is due in our office by April 27, 2023. <u>Responses should not exceed 25 pages</u> and may refer to any additional documents or exhibits that are available on request. Failure to provide a written response to this complaint is in itself a violation of Rule 4-8.4(g). You are further required to furnish the complainant with a complete copy of your written response, including any documents submitted therewith.

Pursuant to Rule 3-7.1(f), Rules of Discipline, you are further required to complete and return the enclosed Certificate of Disclosure form.

Finally, the filing of this complaint does not preclude communication between the attorney and the complainant(s). Please review the enclosed Notice for information on submitting your response.

Sincerely,

Annemarie Craft, Bar Counsel

Attorney Consumer Assistance Program

ACAP Hotline 866-352-0707

**Enclosures** 

cc: Ms. Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje

**EXHIBIT** 

Α

Pursuant to Rule 3-7.1(f) of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, you must execute the applicable section of this form and return it to my attention. The rule provides that the nature of the charges be described in the notice to your firm or you may attach a copy of the complaint.

## **CERTIFICATE OF DISCLOSURE**

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this	day of		20	, a true copy of	
the foregoing disclosure was furnished to _				, a member of	
my present law firm ofif different, to				, and,	
if different, to		, a men	nber o	f the law firm of	
		, with	whic	h I was associated	
at the time of the act(s) giving rise to the co	omplaint in The	Florida Bar Fi	ile No	. 2023-70,449	
(11M).					
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	Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez				
CERTIFICA	TE OF DISC	LOSURE			
(Corporate/Go	overnment Emj	ployment)			
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I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this	day of		20	, a true copy of the	
foregoing disclosure was furnished to					
which I was associated at the time of the ac	t(s) giving rise	to the complai	nt in T	The Florida Bar	
File No. 2023-70,449 (11M).	t(s) giving rise	to the complain	111 111 1	The Florida Dai	
1110 110. 2023 70,447 (11111).					
	Pedro Alejan	dro Gonzalez			
CERTIFICATE OF N	ON-LAW FIR	RM AFFILIAT	TION		
	le Practitioner)		1011		
(23)					
I HEREBY CERTIFY to The Florida Bar of	on this	day of		, 20,	
that I am not presently affiliated with a law	firm and was r	not affiliated w	ith a la	aw firm at the time	
of the act(s) giving rise to the complaint in	The Florida Ba	ır File No. 2023	3-70,4	49 (11M).	
	Pedro Aleian	dro Gonzalez			

#### NOTICE OF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

- 1. The enclosed letter is an official inquiry by bar counsel. Your response is required under Rule 4-8.4(g) of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar. Rule 4-8.4(g)(1) and (2) require that a lawyer submit a written response within 15 days to an initial inquiry and within 10 days to any follow-up inquiry made by bar counsel, the grievance committee or the board of governors during the course of an investigation of the lawyer's conduct. You may respond by US Mail or email to <a href="mailto:acapintake@floridabar.org">acapintake@floridabar.org</a>. Please attach your response to the email and reference the file number in the subject line. If you do not respond, the matter will be forwarded to the grievance committee for disposition in accordance with Rule 3-7.3. Failure to respond may also be a matter of contempt and processed in accordance with Rule 3-7.11(f).
- 2. Many inquiries considered first by staff counsel are not forwarded to a grievance committee, as they do not involve violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct justifying disciplinary action.
- 3. Pursuant to Rule 3-7.1, any reports, correspondence, papers, recordings and/or transcripts of hearings submitted by you in this matter shall become accessible to the public upon dismissal or a decision by the grievance committee. Please advise Bar Counsel if you believe any material provided to The Florida Bar is confidential under applicable law and identify the basis of your claim that the material is confidential. Please note that The Florida Bar is required to acknowledge the status of proceedings during the pendency of an investigation, if a specific inquiry is made and the matter is deemed to be in the public domain.
- 4. The grievance committee is the Bar's "grand jury." Proceedings before the grievance committee are non-adversarial in nature. The grievance committee's function and procedures are set forth in Rule 3-7.4.
- 5. If the grievance committee finds probable cause, formal adversarial proceedings before the Supreme Court of Florida will be initiated pursuant to Rule 3-7.6. A referee will make a recommendation as to guilt and discipline to The Supreme Court of Florida, unless a plea is submitted pursuant to Rule 3-7.9.

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651 East Jefferson Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

Joshua E. Doyle Executive Director 850/561-5600 www.FLORIDABAR.org

April 12, 2023

Ms. Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje 88 S.W. 7th Street Apartment 2112 Miami, FL 33131

Re: Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez; The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Dear Ms. Castellanos Azuaje:

Enclosed is a copy of our letter to Mr. Gonzalez which requires a response to your complaint.

Once you receive Mr. Gonzalez's response, you have 10 days to file a rebuttal if you so desire. **If you decide to file a rebuttal, you must send a copy to Mr. Gonzalez**. Rebuttals should not exceed 25 pages and may refer to any additional documents or exhibits that are available on request. Please address any and all correspondence to me.

It is important that you keep The Florida Bar informed of any changes to your contact information.

Please be advised that as an arm of the Supreme Court of Florida, The Florida Bar can investigate allegations of misconduct against attorneys, and where appropriate, request that the attorney be disciplined. The Florida Bar cannot render legal advice nor can The Florida Bar represent individuals or intervene on their behalf in any civil or criminal matter.

Please review the enclosed Notice on mailing instructions for information on submitting your rebuttal.

Sincerely,

Annemarie Craft, Bar Counsel

Attorney Consumer Assistance Program

ACAP Hotline 866-352-0707

**Enclosures** 

cc: Mr. Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez

#### NOTICE OF GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES

- 1. The enclosed letter is an informal inquiry. Your response is required under the provisions of The Rules Regulating The Florida Bar 4 8.4(g), Rules of Professional Conduct. Failure to provide a written response to this complaint is in itself a violation of Rule 4 8.4(g). You may respond by US Mail or email to <a href="mailto:acapintake@floridabar.org">acapintake@floridabar.org</a>. Please attach your response to the email and reference the file number in the subject line. If you do not respond, the matter will be forwarded to the grievance committee for disposition in accordance with Rule 3-7.3 of the Rules of Discipline.
- 2. Many complaints considered first by staff counsel are not forwarded to a grievance committee, as they do not involve violations of the Rules of Professional Conduct justifying disciplinary action.
- 3. "Pursuant to Rule 3-7.1(a), Rules of Discipline, any response by you in these proceedings shall become part of the public record of this matter and thereby become accessible to the public upon the closure of the case by Bar counsel or upon a finding of no probable cause, probable cause, minor misconduct, or recommendation of diversion. Disclosure during the pendency of an investigation may be made only as to status if a specific inquiry concerning this case is made and if this matter is generally known to be in the public domain."
- 4. The grievance committee is the Bar's "grand jury." Its function and procedure are set forth in Rule 3-7.4. Proceedings before the grievance committee, for the most part, are non-adversarial in nature. However, you should carefully review Chapter 3 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.
- 5. If the grievance committee finds probable cause, formal adversarial proceedings, which ordinarily lead to disposition by the Supreme Court of Florida, will be commenced under 3-7.6, unless a plea is submitted under Rule 3-7.9.

651 East Jefferson Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

Joshua E. Doyle Executive Director 850/561-5600 www.FLORIDABAR.org

May 3, 2023

Mr. Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez 1200 Brickell Ave Ste 950 Miami, FL 331313255

Re: Complaint by Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje against Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez

The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

As of this date, I have not received a copy of your response to the above complaint. Please be advised that you are obligated to provide a written response pursuant to Rule 4-8.4(g).

Please provide the requested information by **May 15, 2023**. Please note that failure to timely provide this information may be considered a violation of Rule 4-8.4(g).

Sincerely,

Annemarie Craft, Bar Counsel

Attorney Consumer Assistance Program

ACAP Hotline 866-352-0707

cc: Ms. Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje

**EXHIBIT** 

B

Received Mon 05/15/2023 4:42PM

From Peter A. Gonzalez

Subject Florida Bar Complaint File No. 2023-70,449 (11) - First Request for Extension of Time to Respond to Bar

Complaint by Genesis Aleska Castellanos

To ACAPIntake cc Aly Romero

bcc

#### Dear Ms. Craft:

This email will confirm my telephone conversation with Audra regarding my request for extension of time to respond to the above-referenced Bar complaint by Ms. Castellanos, a former client that I was forced to terminate as a client of my firm.

I just returned to Miami from travel outside of Florida, and was unaware until yesterday that Ms. Castellanos had filed a Bar complaint against me. In fact, I just read her Bar complaint for the first time. As such, I need an extension of time to compile emails and text messages, together with other documentation, to respond to this Bar complaint, which has no merit. Once the facts missing from the Bar complaint are provided to the Bar, I am confident the Bar will dismiss this frivolous complaint and take no further action.

Audra mentioned that an extension of only 10 days, through May 25, 2023, has been granted for my response to the Bar complaint, and if more time is needed, a written request for such additional extension will be necessary.

Thank you.

#### PETER A. GONZÁLEZ



SANCHEZ-MEDINA, GONZALEZ, QUESADA, LAGE, GOMEZ & MACHADO LLP

1200 Brickell Avenue | Suite 950 | Miami, Florida 33131

Office: 305.377.1000 Ext. 105 | Direct Fax: 855.898.2748 | Toll Free: 855.213.4806

PGonzalez@SMGQLAW.com | SMGQLAW.com | Attorney Bio

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**NO ATTORNEY-CLIENT RELATIONSHIP:** Transmission or receipt of this email, of and by itself, does not constitute legal advice and is not intended to create and does not constitute an attorney-client relationship. Any attorney-client relationship, as well as any legal advice given thereunder, shall only be entered into and/or given, as applicable, pursuant to an express written agreement signed by an authorized member of Sanchez-Medina, Gonzalez, Quesada, Lage, Gomez & Machado LLP.

EXHIBIT

Please note: Florida has very broad public records laws. Many written communications to or from The Florida Bar regarding Bar business may be considered public records, which must be made available to anyone upon request. Your e-mail communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.

Received Thu 05/25/2023 4:41PM

From Peter A. Gonzalez

Subject Florida Bar Complaint File No. 2023-70,449 (11) - First Request for Extension of Time to Respond to Bar

Complaint by Genesis Aleska Castellanos

To ACAPIntake cc Aly Romero

bcc

Dear Ms. Craft:

My response to the Bar complaint filed against me by Aleska Genesis, a former client that I was forced to terminate, is due today. Please note that I was unaware of this Complaint until May 14, 2023, and unfortunately, I need at least a 20-day extension of time for the following reasons: First, I got covid-19 and have been unable to do much, including return to my office to review this file to be able to prepare a Response. Second, the lawyer who I may retain as my counsel in this matter has not been available to confer with me regarding claimant's Complaint and possible legal representation in this matter.

My request for an extension of time will not in any way unduly prejudice the Complainant, who expressly agreed to pay my firm a non-refundable flat fee that was fully earned upon receipt. After months of unacceptable conduct by her, and refusal to comply with a court's instructions and my firm's requirements for ongoing legal representation, she was terminated as a client. Thereafter, purely for retaliatory purposes, she concocted her Bar Complaint against me which has no merit. The Response will refute the alleged facts asserted in the Complaint, provide additional facts that are deliberately missing from the Complaint, and provide the rest of the story and the context needed for the Bar to dismiss the Complaint and take no further action in this matter. If the Complainant wishes to dispute the fee agreement, she can file her civil action in Miami-Dade County so that we can defend it there and seek recovery of fees when she fails to prevail there.

Please let me know by reply email if my request for an extension of time of no less than 20 more days is agreeable to The Florida Bar. Your anticipated cooperation will be very much appreciated. Thank you.

#### PETER A. GONZÁLEZ



SANCHEZ-MEDINA, GONZALEZ, QUESADA, LAGE, GOMEZ & MACHADO LLP

1200 Brickell Avenue | Suite 950 | Miami, Florida 33131

1200 Dilokeli Averide | Suite 950 | Miarrii, Florida 55151

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PGonzalez@SMGQLAW.com | SMGQLAW.com | Attorney Bio

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EXHIBIT

entered into and/or given, as applicable, pursuant to an express written agreement signed by an authorized member of Sanchez-Medina, Gonzalez, Quesada, Lage, Gomez & Machado LLP.

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651 East Jefferson Street Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

Joshua E. Doyle Executive Director 850/561-5600 www.FLORIDABAR.org

June 9, 2023

Mr. Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez Sanchez-Medina, Gonzalez, Quesada, Lage, 1200 Brickell Ave Ste 950 Miami, FL 33131-3255

Re: Complaint by Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje against Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez

The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

As of this date, I have not received a copy of your response to the above complaint. Please be advised that you are obligated to provide a written response pursuant to Rule 4-8.4(g).

Please provide the requested information by **June 19, 2023**. Please note that failure to timely provide this information may be considered a violation of Rule 4-8.4(g).

Sincerely,

Annemarie Craft, Bar Counsel

Attorney Consumer Assistance Program

ACAP Hotline 866-352-0707

cc: Ms. Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje

**EXHIBIT** 

Ε

Miami Branch Office 444 Brickell Avenue Rivergate Plaza, Suite M-100 Miami, Florida 33131-2404 (305) 377-4445

Joshua E. Doyle Executive Director 850/561-5600 www.floridabar.org

June 28, 2023

VIA E-Mail to pgonzalez@smgqlaw.com

Mr. Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez Sanchez-Medina, Gonzalez, Quesada, Lage, 1200 Brickell Ave Ste 950 Miami, FL 33131-3255

Re: Complaint of Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje against Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

Enclosed you will find correspondence dated April 12, 2023, requiring a response. Please be advised that a written response is required pursuant to Rule 4-8.4(g) of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar, and a response has not been received. You were previously granted two extensions by ACAP. Again, a response has not been received from you. You are reminded that failure to respond to a bar inquiry, is itself a potential rule violation and may subject you to contempt proceedings.

If a response is not received by <u>July 10, 2023</u>, this matter will be forwarded to the grievance committee for further investigation.

Sincerely,

Tonya L. Avery Bar Counsel

TA/raf

Enclosure – The Florida Bar Letter dated April 12, 2023.

**EXHIBIT** 

F

**Received** Tue 07/11/2023 3:25PM

From Avery, Tonya L

Subject The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449(11M) Regarding Your Request for Extension

To Gonzalez, Pedro cc Fonseca, Rafael

bcc

#### Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

Pursuant to our conversation, your request for an extension has been approved until

. You were also advised that failure to submit a response may result in contempt charges being filed against you. You understand that this request was granted based on your representations that on or about June 22, 2023, you injured your knee and then had to have surgery. I requested documentation evidencing same. You agreed. I also emphasized how important it is for you to file a written response to the bar grievance, since ACAP had already granted you two extensions. However, no response was received. You agreed to submit your response by **Monday July 31, 2023**. I advised that you could always supplement your response if needed.

Wishing you a speedy recovery!

#### Thanks!

Tonya L. Avery, Bar Counsel The Florida Bar Rivergate Plaza, Suite M100 444 Brickell Avenue Miami, FL 33131 Phone: (305) 377-4445

Fax: (305) 377-4519

Email: tavery@floridabar.org

Please note: Florida has very broad public records laws. Many written communications to or from The Florida Bar regarding Bar business may be considered public records, which must be made available to anyone upon request. Your e-mail communications may therefore be subject to public disclosure.

EXHIBIT

Miami Branch Office 444 Brickell Avenue Rivergate Plaza, Suite M-100 Miami, Florida 33131-2404 (305) 377-4445

Joshua E. Doyle Executive Director 850/561-5600 www.floridabar.org

August 2, 2023

U.S. Regular Mail, Certified Mail, Return Receipt Requested (Tracking No. 7014 2120 0003 5157 1289) and VIA E-Mail to <a href="mailto:pgonzalez@smgqlaw.com">pgonzalez@smgqlaw.com</a>,

Mr. Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez, Esq. 1200 Brickell Avenue, Suite 950 Miami, FL 33131-3255

Re: Complaint by Genesis Aleska Castellanos Azuaje against Pedro Alejandro Gonzalez The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M)

Dear Mr. Gonzalez:

Please be advised that pursuant to Rules 3-7.4 and 3-7.11 of the Rules of Discipline, Grievance Committee "M" of the Eleventh Judicial Circuit will consider whether good cause exists for your failure to respond to official Bar Inquiry in The Florida Bar File No. 2023-70,449 (11M). In accordance with Rule 3-7.11(f)(2), the Grievance Committee shall hear the issue of noncompliance and issue findings thereon.

Pursuant to the requirements of Rule 3-7.4(a), Rules of Discipline, below is a list of the members of Grievance Committee 11"M". There will be no appearances by either party or by any witnesses in this case.

An index reflecting materials which will be considered by the Grievance Committee, along with copies of said materials, is enclosed herewith. Should you wish to present a written statement to the Grievance Committee pursuant to Rule 3-7.4(h) of the Rules of Discipline, please provide same to me **no later than Thursday, August 17, 2023**.

Sincerely,

Rita Florez, Bar Counsel

EXHIBIT L

## THE FLORIDA BAR

Enclosures: Grievance Committee Roster and Index

cc: Jessica K. Obenauf, Chair

Jorge Luis Piedra, Designated Reviewer

## List of Members of Grievance Committee (11M) (Pursuant to the requirements of Rule 3-7.4(a), the following is a list of the members of the Grievance Committee considering this matter)

Jessica K. Obenauf, Chair Raquel A. Lacayo-Valle, Vice-Chair James R. DuBray, Esq. Caycie B. Flitman, Esq. Carlos E. Sardi, Esq. Stephen B. Fuller, Esq. Nan A. Markowitz (NL) David Lorenzo (NL) Margarita Curiel (NL)

### **Index of Materials to be Reviewed**

- 1. Memorandum to Grievance Committee "11M" dated August 2, 2023.
- 2. The Florida Bar's letter dated April 12, 2023.
- 3. The Florida Bar's letter dated May 3, 2023.
- 4. The Florida Bar's email to respondent dated May 15, 2023.
- 5. Respondent's email dated May 25, 2023, requesting an extension to respond.
- 6. The Florida Bar's letter dated June 9, 2023.
- 7. The Florida Bar's letter dated June 28, 2023.
- 8. The Florida Bar's email to respondent dated July 11, 2023, granting extension until July 31, 2023.