

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

THE FLORIDA BAR,

Petitioner,

v.

RAWSI WILLIAMS,

Respondent.

Supreme Court Case
No. SC-

The Florida Bar File Nos.
2025-70,605(11P)(MES)
2024-70,495(11P)

_____ /

PETITION FOR EMERGENCY SUSPENSION

This petition of The Florida Bar (the bar) seeks emergency relief and requires the immediate attention of this Court under Rule 3-5.2 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar. The bar seeks the emergency suspension of Rawsi Williams, Attorney No. 103201, from the practice of law in Florida based on facts set forth in the affidavit(s) of Matthew Herdeker, Certified Public Accountant and staff auditor for The Florida Bar attached as Exhibit "A," that establish clearly and convincingly that Rawsi Williams has caused, or is likely to cause, immediate and serious harm to clients or the public as follows:

1. The bar's Executive Director authorized filing this Petition for Emergency Suspension.

2. Respondent, Raws Williams, is and, at all times the relevant conduct occurred was, a member of The Florida Bar subject to the jurisdiction and disciplinary rules of this Court.

3. Respondent is currently the subject of a bar disciplinary matter which has been assigned The Florida Bar File No. 2024-70,495(11P).

4. The bar's investigation of this matter indicates that respondent misappropriated client funds in contravention of Chapter 5 of the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.

5. The enclosed affidavit of Matthew Herdeker, Certified Public Accountant and staff auditor for The Florida Bar supports this Petition for Emergency Suspension. (See Ex. A).

6. Ms. Clermont retained respondent in an Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) matter in May 2022.

7. On February 15, 2024, respondent notified Ms. Clermont that she received settlement funds in the EEOC case.

8. On that same day, Ms. Clermont's settlement proceeds in the amount of \$86,265.80 were wired into respondent's operating account at Bank of America ending in #4381. (See Ex. A).

9. Of that total, Ms. Clermont was due to receive \$70,265.82. (See Ex. A).

10. The moment respondent accepted the wire transfer of Ms. Clermont's settlement money into her operating account, she commingled money belonging to a client with her own operating funds.

11. Instead of disbursing the settlement funds to Ms. Clermont, as required, the money was instead disbursed in Zelle payments to recipients who appear to be entirely unrelated to Ms. Clermont's matter. These are described as "family," recipients with the description "COGIC," and to a recipient with the description "Home Sagar." A portion of the settlement was also transferred to two cryptocurrency exchanges: Kraken and Payward Ventures, Inc.

12. None of the payments went to Ms. Clermont. Moreover, Ms. Clermont did not authorize any of the above-described distributions. As such, these actions constituted a misappropriation of Ms. Clermont's settlement proceeds.

13. Ms. Clermont made numerous requests for her settlement proceeds. Eventually, respondent provided Ms. Clermont with a check in the amount of \$70,256.32. However, when Ms. Clermont went to the bank to deposit the settlement proceeds on March 21, 2024, the bank teller informed her that the check was not valid.

14. When the bank teller returned the check to Ms. Clermont, the letters “NSF” were written on its face.

15. Between March 19, 2024, and March 21, 2024, respondent received six wire transfers totaling \$96,336.00 to the operating account ending in Bank of America #4381 from Payward Ventures Inc.¹, Florida Eastern Ecclesias², Lighthouse Worship Center³, and Vincent W. Chadwick.⁴

16. A portion of the funds received from the wire transfers were used to transfer a total of \$71,000.00 to respondent’s Bank of America #0967 trust account on March 20, 2024, and March 22, 2024, which increased the trust account balance from \$280.21 to \$71,280.21.

17. In a manner similar to a Ponzi scheme³, respondent utilized these new deposits from unrelated sources to satisfy her obligations to Ms. Clermont.

18. On April 26, 2024, respondent issued a cashier’s check from her Bank of America #0967 trust account in the amount of \$70,265.32, payable to Ms. Clermont, representing the proceeds from her settlement.

1 Payward Ventures is a cryptocurrency exchange.

2 This wire transfer was described as “Retainer.”

3 The wire transfer was described as “Attorney Fees”

4 This transfer was described as “Family Investment Club.”

19. These funds originated from the cryptocurrency exchange, the retainer, the attorney fees, and the so-called family investment club, rather than from the settlement funds in the EEOC action.

20. When the grievance against respondent was initiated, the bar requested additional information from respondent.

21. On August 30, 2024, bar counsel emailed respondent and asked her to provide additional documentation including all client ledgers and monthly reconciliations for her Bank of America #0967 trust account for the period February 1, 2024 to present. The records were due on or before September 17, 2024. (See Ex. A).

22. Respondent provided records on September 18, 2024 and October 17, 2024, but did not include any ledgers or reconciliations. (See Ex. A).

23. The bar served several subpoenas on respondent between October 2024 and November 2024 for trust account records for the Bank of America #0967 trust account to include client ledgers, monthly reconciliations, and monthly comparisons for the period February 1, 2024 through September 30, 2024, and the period between January 1, 2023 through January 31, 2024. Although respondent acknowledged receipt of one subpoena, she did not provide the records requested.

24. Chapter 5-1.2 of the Rules Regulating the Florida Bar required respondent to maintain ledgers, monthly reconciliations, and monthly comparisons, and to provide them to the bar upon request.

25. To date, respondent has not provided the ledgers, monthly reconciliations, or monthly comparisons she was directed to provide in the two subpoenas.

26. Moreover, respondent made a misrepresentation when she certified that she was in compliance with the trust account and property safekeeping rules when she paid her annual membership dues in 2023 and 2024.

27. The Florida Bar's staff auditor examined the records obtained from respondent and The Florida Bar Foundation, which revealed additional misconduct related to respondent's trust account.

28. Specifically, respondent represented Akeem Spence in a child support matter.

29. On or around October 2021, the court entered an order, requiring Mr. Spence to pay monthly child support in the amount of \$3,000.00.

30. From October 2021 through June 2022, Mr. Spence paid the child support directly through the mother's Zelle account.

31. In June 2022, the mother changed her Zelle account information, and that method of payment was no longer available to Mr. Spence. Subsequently, he was instructed to provide the payments to his attorney. Respondent was tasked with making the disbursement to the mother. Mr. Spence sent his monthly support payments as directed.

32. Respondent, however, failed to disburse these funds to the mother in satisfaction of her client's obligation.

33. Accordingly, in December 2022, the mother filed a Motion for Contempt, alleging that Mr. Spence had not made the required child support payments since June 2022, meaning he was at least \$18,000.00 in arrears.

34. Between January 2023 and April 2024, Mr. Spence made an additional 16 monthly Zelle payments, totaling \$24,000.00 into respondent's Bank of America #9139 operating account. Most payments referenced "child support." (See Ex. A).

35. Respondent's commingled Mr. Spence's child support payments with her operating funds.

36. Respondent misappropriated the funds sent to her for the court-ordered child support. She generally wired the money from her Bank of America #9139 operating account to another Bank of America #4381

operating account, and from there to a Bank of America #2847 personal checking account, where they were disbursed to Payward Ventures, a cryptocurrency exchange. (See Ex. A).

37. On April 5, 2024, the judge in the family court case ordered Mr. Spence to pay \$31,500.00 to the mother. The payment was to be made by respondent to opposing counsel on or before April 15, 2024. (See Ex. A).

38. As respondent's operating account balance on April 5, 2024 was well below the \$31,500.00, required to satisfy her client's obligation, respondent used funds from the cryptocurrency exchanges to pay the \$31,500.00 in back child support to the mother. (See Ex. A).

39. Respondent's conduct above violated the following Rules Regulating The Florida Bar: 4-1.15 (Safekeeping Property), 4-8.4(c) (A lawyer shall not engage in conduct involving dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation); 4-8.4(d) (A lawyer shall not engage in conduct prejudicial to the administration of justice); 4-8.4(g) (A lawyer shall not fail to respond, in writing, to any official inquiry by bar counsel or a disciplinary agency); 5-1.1 (Trust Accounts).; and 5-1.2 (Trust Accounts).

The above facts show that respondent has caused, or is likely to cause, immediate and serious harm to clients or the public and immediate action must be taken to protect respondent's clients and the public.

Therefore, under Rule 3-5.2, the bar respectfully requests this Court issue an order suspending respondent from the practice of law until further order of this Court and ordering respondent to:

A. Immediately:

- i. accept no new clients from the date of this Court's order of emergency suspension;
- ii. initiate no litigation on behalf of clients from the date of this Court's order of emergency suspension;
- iii. provide a copy of this Court's order of emergency suspension to all courts, tribunals, or adjudicative agencies before which Rawsi Williams is counsel of record; all state, federal, or administrative bars of which respondent is a member; all clients; all co-counsel; and all opposing counsel, as required by Rule 3-5.1(h);
- iv. cease withdrawing or disbursing any money from any trust account or other financial institution account holding funds of clients or third parties in respondent's possession in connection with legal representation or funds of third parties in connection with respondent's service as a fiduciary including, but not limited to, personal representative, guardian, or trustee, until

further order of this Court, a judicial referee appointed by this Court, or by order of the circuit court in an inventory attorney proceeding instituted under Rule 1-3.8;

- v. not transfer any ownership of any real or personal property purchased in whole or in part with funds of clients or third parties in connection with legal representation or with funds of third parties in connection with respondent's service as a fiduciary including, but not limited to, personal representative, guardian, or trustee, without approval of this Court, a judicial referee appointed by this Court, or by order of the circuit court in an inventory attorney proceeding instituted under Rule 1-3.8;
- vi. deposit any fees or other sums received in connection with the practice of law or employment as a personal representative, guardian, or trustee, by respondent on or after the date of this Court's order of emergency suspension into a specified trust account from which withdrawal may only be made by order of this Court, a judicial referee appointed by this Court, or by order of the circuit court in an inventory attorney proceeding instituted under Rule 1-3.8;

- vii. provide a copy of this Court's order of emergency suspension to all banks and financial institutions where respondent maintains any account holding funds of clients or third parties in respondent's possession in connection with representation or funds of third parties in connection with respondent's service as a fiduciary including, but not limited to, personal representative, guardian, or trustee;
- viii. comply with, and provide all documents and testimony responsive to, a subpoena from the bar for trust account records and any related documents necessary for the bar to conduct a trust account audit;
- ix. authorize any referee appointed in these proceedings to determine entitlement to funds in any trust accounts frozen as a result of an order entered in this matter; and
- x. turn over to any successor the complete financial records of any estate, guardianship, or trust in which respondent served as a fiduciary on the successor's appointment; and

B. Within 30 days from the date of this Court's order of emergency suspension:

- i. cease all practice of law in Florida;

- ii. withdraw from representation of all clients;
- iii. wind down all pending matters;
- iv. cease holding yourself out as a Florida Bar member or lawyer and eliminate all indicia of respondent's status as a Florida Bar member or lawyer on websites, email, social media, telephone listings, stationery, checks, business cards, office signs, email address, and any other indicia of respondent's status as a Florida Bar member or lawyer;
- v. cease acting as a fiduciary, including, but not limited to, personal representative for any estate, guardian for any ward, and trustee for any trust;
- vi. provide Staff Counsel with an affidavit listing all of the following that respondent notified of this Court's order of emergency suspension: all courts, tribunals, or adjudicative agencies of which respondent is a member; all state, federal, or administrative bars of which respondent is a member; all clients; all co-counsel; and all opposing counsel;
- vii. provide bar counsel in this case with an affidavit listing each bank or financial institution respondent provided with a copy of this Court's order of emergency suspension; and

- viii. notify bar counsel in this case of the receipt and location of any fees or other sums received in connection with the practice of law or in connection with respondent's service as a fiduciary, including, but not limited to, personal representative, guardian, or trustee, received by respondent after issuance of this Court's order of emergency suspension.

Respectfully submitted,



Rita Florez, Bar Counsel
The Florida Bar, Miami Branch Office
Ste. M100, Rivergate Plaza
444 Brickell Ave.
Miami, FL 33131
(305) 377-4445
Florida Bar No. 1011307
RFlorez@floridabar.org



PATRICIA ANN TORO SAVITZ
Staff Counsel
The Florida Bar
651 East Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2300
(850) 561-5600
Florida Bar No. 559547
psavitz@floridabar.org

/s/

JOSHUA E. DOYLE
Executive Director
The Florida Bar
651 East Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2300
(850) 561-5600
Florida Bar No. 25902
jdoyle@floridabar.org

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that this document has been filed via the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal with The Honorable John A. Tomasino, Clerk of the Supreme Court of Florida with a copy provided via the portal to , at rawsi@rawsi.com; and that a copy has been provided by United States Mail via certified mail No. 9589 0710 5270 0677 1183 40, return receipt requested to Rawsi Williams, whose record bar address is Bank of America Building 701 Brickell Ave Ste 1550, Miami, FL 33131-2824 and via email to Rita Florez, Bar Counsel, RFlorez@floridabar.org, on this 18th day of July, 2025.



PATRICIA ANN TORO SAVITZ
Staff Counsel
The Florida Bar
651 East Jefferson Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2300
(850) 561-5600
Florida Bar No. 559547
psavitz@floridabar.org

NOTICE OF DESIGNATION OF PRIMARY EMAIL ADDRESS

Bar counsel in this matter is Rita Florez, Bar Counsel, whose address, telephone number and primary email address are The Florida Bar, Miami Branch Office, Ste. M100, Rivergate Plaza 444 Brickell Avenue, Miami FL 33131, (305) 377-4445 and RFlorez@floridabar.org. Respondent need not address pleadings, correspondence, etc. in this matter to anyone other than bar counsel and to Patricia Ann Toro Savitz, Staff Counsel, The Florida Bar, 651 E. Jefferson Street, Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300, psavitz@floridabar.org.

NOTICE OF MANDATORY ELECTRONIC FILING

All parties must file all pleadings, motions, and notices in this matter electronically, with a copy to the referee, through the Florida Courts E-Filing Portal, www.myflcourtaaccess.com, under Rule Regulating The Florida Bar 3-7.6(h)(5)(A) and (B).

MANDATORY ANSWER NOTICE

RULE 3-5.2(a), OF THE RULES REGULATING THE FLORIDA BAR, PROVIDES THAT A RESPONDENT SHALL ANSWER A COMPLAINT.