

Julie Rush, LCSW-C
License Number 12447

Date: 2/14/19

Sherryl Silberman, LCSW-C, Board Chair
Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners
4201 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21215

RE: Permanent Surrender of License to Practice Social Work
License Number 12447
Case Number: 2018-2482

Dear Ms. Silberman and Members of the Board:

Please be advised that I have decided to **PERMANENTLY SURRENDER** my license to practice social work, clinical or otherwise, in the State of Maryland, License Number 12447, effective upon the acceptance of this letter by the Board Chair. I understand that by permanently surrendering my license, I may not represent myself to the public by title, abbreviation, sign, card, or other representation that I am a licensed social worker. Moreover, I may not engage in the practice of social work, in any capacity, as it is defined in the Maryland Social Workers Act (the "Act"), Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. ("Health Occ.") § 19-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2018 Supp.).

I understand that upon the Board's acceptance, this Permanent Letter of Surrender becomes a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT** and a **FINAL ORDER** of the Board. I understand that the permanent surrender of my license means that I am in the same position as an unlicensed individual.

My decision to permanently surrender my license to practice social work in the State of Maryland was prompted by the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board") and its subsequent issuance of a Notice of Intent to Revoke Licensure ("Intent to Revoke") under the following provisions of the Act, Health Occ. § 19-311:

Subject to the hearing provisions of § 19-312 of this subtitle, the Board may deny a license to any applicant, fine a licensee, reprimand any licensee, place any licensee on probation, or suspend or revoke a license if the applicant or licensee:

- (4) Commits any act of gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct in the practice of social work;

- (5) Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work; [and]
- (6) Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board[.]

The pertinent provisions of COMAR, the code of ethics, provide the following:

COMAR 10.42.03.03. Responsibilities to Clients.

- B. The licensee may not:
 - (3) Exploit a relationship with a client for personal advantage or satisfaction;
 - (7) Share with another individual a confidence revealed by a client without a client's consent, except if there is danger to self or to another individual, or for a compelling professional reason[.]

COMAR 10.42.03.05. Relationships.

- A. The licensee may not enter into a dual relationship with a client or an individual with whom the client has a close personal relationship.
- C. The licensee may not engage in sexual misconduct with either current or former clients.
- D. The licensee may not engage in sexual misconduct with a client, supervisee, student, trainee, or colleague over whom the licensee exercises professional authority.

COMAR 10.42.03.06. Standards of Practice.

- B. A licensee may not:
 - (2) Engage in other relationships that could limit the licensee's objectivity or create a conflict of

interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

The Board's investigation was based on a complaint to the Board alleging that I engaged in a dual relationship, sexual misconduct with a client, and shared a client's information to another individual without the client's consent. The Board's investigation revealed that I provided treatment to a lesbian couple (Patient A and Patient B)¹ in both couples and individual therapy. While Patient A (the complainant) and Patient B were receiving services from me, I admit that I engaged in an inappropriate relationship with both Patient A and Patient B, and that my inappropriate actions included the following:

- I offered Patient A and her children to stay with me at my apartment.
- I corresponded with Patient A via text messages, some of which were therapy-related, and others which were "a friendship kind of thing."
- I went on dates with Patient B.
- Patient B slept over at my house and I spent the night at Patient B's house.
- I provided Patient B with a key to my house.
- I went on vacation to Virginia Beach with Patient B.
- Numerous sexually explicit messages were sent from my social media account to Patient B's social media account, where I acknowledged having sexual contact with Patient B and made sexual remarks in the non-therapeutic context with Patient B.
- According to the messages from my social media account, I kissed Patient B, initiated hugs with Patient B, and left a "suck mark" on Patient B.
- On several occasions, I told Patient B that I loved Patient B.
- Patient B's son reported that he observed Patient B and myself hug and kiss.
- Patient B's son also reported that I slept in "mommy's bed" on Patient A's pillow.
- Patient B's son heard myself and Patient B say, "I love you to each other."²

Furthermore, in or around late summer of 2017, Patient A withdrew her consent for me to share any information Patient A disclosed during her treatment to Patient B, however, I continued to share Patient A's confidential information with Patient B.

As a result of the investigation, on August 29, 2018, the Board issued the Notice of Intent to Revoke Licensure in Board Case Number 2018-2482. (A copy of the Intent to Revoke is attached hereto and incorporated herein as Attachment A).

¹ For confidentiality purposes, the patients' names have not been identified in this Letter of Surrender. The identity of Patient A and Patient B is known to me and to the Board.

² Patient B's son also asked his father if I was going to be "mommy's new wife."

I have decided to permanently surrender my license to practice social work in the State of Maryland to resolve this matter and to avoid prosecution of the Intent to Revoke. I wish to make it clear that I have voluntarily, knowingly and freely chosen to submit this letter of Surrender. I acknowledge that the Office of the Attorney General has legally sufficient evidence to prove by a preponderance of the evidence at an administrative hearing that I violated the Act as detailed herein. I recognize that for all purposes relevant to licensure that these allegations, including the Allegations of Fact in the Intent to Revoke, shall be treated as proven and that these allegations support a conclusion that I violated the Act as detailed herein.

I understand that by executing this permanent Letter of Surrender I am waiving any right to contest the Board's Intent to Revoke in a formal evidentiary hearing at which I would have had the right to counsel, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my own behalf and all other substantive and procedural protections provided by law, including the right to appeal.

I acknowledge that on or before the effective date of this Letter of Surrender, I shall present to the Board my Maryland social work license, including any renewal certificates and wallet-sized renewal cards in my possession.

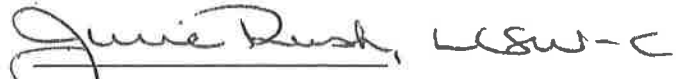
I understand that the Board will advise the Association of State Boards of Social Work, the National Practitioner Data Bank, and any other required entities of this Letter of Surrender, and in response to any inquiry, will advise that I have permanently surrendered my license in lieu of disciplinary action under the Act as a resolution of the matters pending against me. I also understand that, in the event that I would apply for licensure in any form in any other state or jurisdiction, that this Permanent Letter of Surrender may be released or published by the Board to the same extent as a Final Order that would result from disciplinary action pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. §§ 4-101 *et seq.* (2014); and that all underlying documents may be released to the other state or jurisdiction. Finally, I understand that this Permanent Letter of Surrender is considered a disciplinary action by the Board.

I further recognize and agree that by submitting this Letter of Surrender my license will remain surrendered permanently.

I acknowledge that I may not rescind this permanent Letter of Surrender in part or in its entirety for any reason. Finally, I wish to make clear that I have been given the opportunity to consult with an attorney before signing this permanent Letter of Surrender. I understand both the nature of the Board's actions and this permanent Letter of Surrender fully. I acknowledge that I understand and comprehend the language, meaning

and terms and effect of this Letter of Surrender. I make this decision knowingly, voluntarily and without duress.

Sincerely,

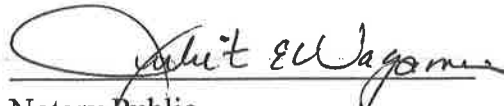

Julie Rush, LCSW-C

NOTARY

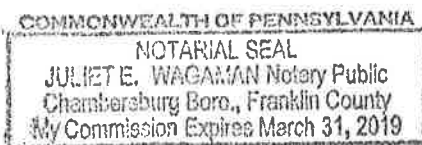
^{PA.}
STATE OF MARYLAND
CITY/COUNTY OF Franklin

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 14 day of February, 2019,
before me, a Notary Public of the State and City/County aforesaid, personally appeared
Julie Rush, and declared and affirmed under the penalties of perjury that signing the
foregoing Letter of Surrender was her voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS my hand and Notarial seal.



Notary Public

My Commission expires: 3/31/2019



ACCEPTANCE

On this 8th day of March, 2019, I, Sherryl Silberman, LCSW-C, on behalf of the Board, accept the **PUBLIC** and **PERMANENT SURRENDER** of Julie Rush's license to practice social work in the State of Maryland.



Sherryl Silberman, LCSW-C, Board Chair
Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners

Attachment A

**IN THE MATTER OF
JULIE RUSH, LCSW-C
RESPONDENT**

License Number: 12447

*** BEFORE THE MARYLAND
* STATE BOARD OF
* SOCIAL WORK EXAMINERS
* Case Number: 2018-2482**

* * * * *

NOTICE OF INTENT TO REVOKE LICENSURE

The Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (the “Board”) hereby notifies **JULIE RUSH, LCSW-C** (the “Respondent”), License Number 12447, of the Board’s intent to revoke her license to practice social work in the State of Maryland, under the Maryland Social Workers Act (the “Act”), Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. (“Health Occ.”) §§ 19-101, *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2017 Supp.).

Specifically, the Board bases its action on the Respondent’s violation of the following provisions of Health Occ. § 19-311:

Subject to the hearing provisions of § 19-312 of this subtitle, the Board may deny a license to any applicant, fine a licensee, reprimand any licensee, place any licensee on probation, or suspend or revoke a license if the applicant or licensee:

- (4) Commits any act of gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct in the practice of social work;
- (5) Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work; [and]
- (6) Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board[.]

The pertinent provisions of COMAR, the code of ethics, provide the following:

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- D. The licensee may not engage in sexual misconduct with a client, supervisee, student, trainee, or colleague over whom the licensee exercises professional authority.

COMAR 10.42.03.06. Standards of Practice.

- B. A licensee may not:
 - (2) Engage in other relationships that could limit the licensee's objectivity or create a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.

ALLEGATIONS OF FACT¹

The Board bases its action on the following facts that it has reason to believe are true:

¹ The allegations regarding the Respondent's conduct identified herein are intended to provide the Respondent with notice of the basis of the Board's action. They are not intended as, and do not necessarily represent, a complete description of the evidence, either documentary or testimonial, to be offered against the Respondent.

1. At all times relevant hereto, the Respondent was licensed to practice clinical social work in the State of Maryland. The Respondent was initially licensed to practice clinical social work in Maryland on or about July 15, 2004, under license number 12447. The Respondent's license expires on October 31, 2018.

Complaint

2. On or about April 20, 2018, the Board received a complaint (the "Complaint") from a client (the "Complainant")² alleging that the Respondent engaged in an "emotional affair" with the Complainant and the Complainant's wife who was also a client of the Respondent's (the "Client"). The Complaint further alleged that the Respondent broke the Complainant's confidentiality when the Respondent divulged the Complainant's confidential information to the Client.

3. Based on the Complaint, the Board began an investigation of the Respondent.

Investigation

4. In furtherance of its investigation, the Board obtained records from the Respondent's employer. In addition, the Board obtained correspondence between the Respondent and the Complainant sent via text message, email, and a social media messaging service, as well as, correspondence between the Respondent and the Client sent via text message, email, and a social media messaging service.

² For purposes of ensuring confidentiality, proper names have been omitted and replaced with generic placeholders. Upon written request, the Administrative Prosecutor will provide the information to the Respondent.

5. Finally, the Board conducted interviews of the Respondent, the Complainant, and the father of the Client's son (the "Father").

6. The Board's investigation revealed that the Complainant received counseling services from the Respondent at a mental health center ("Facility A") where the Respondent was employed as a therapist.

7. After the Complainant ceased receiving services from the Respondent at Facility A, the Complainant became friends with the Respondent on Facebook.

8. In or around 2015 the Respondent began employment as a therapist at a facility that provides comprehensive behavioral and mental health services ("Facility B").

9. According to patient records received from the Respondent, the Complainant was a client of the Respondent's at Facility B for approximately two years from on or about January 12, 2016 until December 5, 2017, when the Complainant requested to be discharged from the Respondent's care.

10. While under the Respondent's care, the Complainant sent text messages to the Respondent to talk about the Client, their two special needs children and her work, which she believed was part of therapy.

11. The Respondent also provided individual and couples therapy to the Complainant and the Client at Facility B. The Complainant requested that the Respondent provide couples therapy to the Complainant and the Client because they "needed some assistance in . . . making sure [their] marriage lasted."

12. Shortly after the couples therapy sessions began with the Respondent, the Complainant noticed the Client and the Respondent were text messaging and calling each other outside of the counseling sessions.

13. In or around July 2017, the Complainant confronted the Respondent because she believed the Respondent was having “an emotional affair” with the Client due to the ongoing text messaging and telephone calls between the Client and the Respondent during family time.

14. The Complainant believed the Respondent was also having “an emotional affair” with the Complainant because the Respondent offered the Complainant and her children to stay with the Respondent at the Respondent’s apartment. The Complainant also believed the Respondent was having “an emotional affair” with the Complainant because the Respondent

became the person [the Complainant] went to for just about everything, and when I realized that I started caring more about [the Respondent’s] opinion than [the Client’s] . . . I realized that the emotional affair that I had confronted them about with [the Client] is what also was occurring with me, I cut off the relationship completely.

15. In or around late summer of 2017, the Complainant verbally withdrew her consent for the Respondent to share any information regarding the Complainant disclosed during her treatment with the Client. Patient records received from the Respondent indicate that on or about February 22, 2018, the Complainant requested that information regarding the Complainant not be released to the Client. The Respondent, however, did not cease sharing the Complainant’s information with the Client.³

16. On or about January 13, 2018, the Client began spending nights at the Respondent's house.⁴

17. The Client and the Respondent also went on vacation together to Virginia Beach from February 16, 2018 until February 18, 2018.

Messages

18. The Board received instant messages the Respondent generated; one of those messages dated on or about May 2, 2016, revealed that when the Complainant sent a message to the Respondent stating at the next counseling session she wanted to discuss the topic of moving to Myrtle Beach, the Respondent replied, "Only if I can move with u."

19. A review of copies of messages the Board received between the Respondent and the Client revealed:

- a. The Respondent sent numerous sexually explicit messages to the Client on several occasions, where the Respondent acknowledged having sexual contact with the Client and made sexual remarks in the non-therapeutic context with the Client.

³ After the Complainant separated from the Client, the Complainant went in and made sure that there was nothing on file that would allow the Client to get information about the Complainant's records, and the Complainant requested a copy of the Complainant's medical records. Later, in a couples therapy session that the Complainant and the Client had with another provider around mid-February or March, the Client mentioned that she knew the Complainant requested a copy of her medical records. The Complainant felt the only individuals that knew she requested a copy of her medical records was the person copying the medical records and the Respondent.

⁴ The Client stayed overnight at the Respondent's house on January 12-19, 2018; January 24, 2018; January 27-31, 2018; and February 1, 2018. The Respondent stayed with the Client at the Client's house on several dates including, but not limited to, February 2-4, 2018; February 28, 2018; and March 1-5, 2018; March 7-10, 2018; March 11-12, 2018; March 14-15, 2018; March 31, 2018; and April 1-10, 2018.

- b. On one occasion, the Respondent and the Client acknowledged having an “emotional affai[r].”
- c. On several occasions, the Respondent told the Client that she loved the Client.
- d. The Respondent acknowledged spending time with the Client outside of their therapy sessions. For example, on numerous occasions the Client went to the Respondent’s house, went on dates with the Respondent, slept over the Respondent’s house, and slept in the same bed with the Respondent.
- e. The Respondent provided the Client with a key to the Respondent’s house.
- f. The Respondent acknowledged numerous times that the Respondent’s relationship with the Client may be interfering with the Client’s relationship with the Complainant.
- g. After the Complainant rescinded verbal consent for disclosure of her confidential information, the Respondent continued to share the Complainant’s confidential information with the Client.

Board Investigator’s Interviews

20. In an interview with the Board’s investigator on or about June 15, 2018, the Father disclosed that he and the Client have a son together. The Father stated that his son told him he saw the Client and the Respondent hugging and kissing. The son also told the Father that the Respondent slept in “mommy’s bed” on the Complainant’s pillow and that

he heard the Respondent and the Client say, "I love you to each other." Finally, the Father stated that his son asked him if the Respondent was going to be "mommy's new wife."

21. In an interview with the Board's investigator on June 5, 2018, the Respondent:

- a. Admitted that her relationship with the Complainant and the Client was inappropriate and a boundary should have been set.
- b. Admitted the Client spent the night at the Respondent's house and that she spent the night at the Client's house.
- c. She further admitted that she gave the Client a key to the Respondent's house.

22. The Respondent's engaging in dual relationship and sexual misconduct with individual(s) with whom she rendered professional services, as set forth above, constitutes violation of: Health Occ. § 19-311(4)(commits any act of gross negligence, incompetence, or misconduct in the practice of social work); § 19-311(5)(engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work); and/or § 19-311(6)(violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board) in that the Respondent violated COMAR 10.42.03.05(A), (C), and (D) by entering into a dual relationship with a client and engaging in sexual misconduct with a client.

NOTICE OF POSSIBLE SANCTIONS

If, after a hearing, the Board finds that there are grounds for action under Health Occ. § 19-311(4), (5) and/or (6), and/or COMAR 10.42.03.05, it may impose disciplinary

sanctions in accordance with the Board's regulations under COMAR 10.42.09.04, including reprimanding the Respondent, placing the Respondent on probation, or suspending or revoking the Respondent's license, and may impose a monetary penalty.

NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY FOR HEARING

In accordance with the Administrative Procedures Act, Md. Code Ann., State Gov't. §§ 10-201 *et seq.*, the Board hereby notifies the Respondent of her opportunity for a hearing prior to the Board making a final decision in this case. The Respondent must request a hearing **WITHIN THIRTY (30) DAYS** of service of this Notice. The request for hearing must be made in writing to:

Stanley E. Weinstein, PhD, LCSW-C
Executive Director
Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners
4201 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21215-2299
Telephone: (410) 764-4788
Facsimile: (410) 358-2469

If a request for a hearing is made, a hearing before the Board will be scheduled. If the Board does not receive a written request for a hearing within thirty (30) days of service of this Notice on the Respondent, the Board will sign the attached Final Order.

Date

8/29/2018



Sheryl Silberman, LCSW-C, Board Chair
Maryland Board of Social Work Examiners