

<b>IN THE MATTER OF</b>	*	<b>BEFORE THE MARYLAND STATE</b>
<b>BILAL ALI, LCPC, LCADC</b>	*	<b>BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL</b>
<b>Respondent</b>	*	<b>COUNSELORS AND THERAPISTS</b>
<b>License Number: LC9988 &amp; LCA2717</b>	*	<b>Case Number: 2021-061</b>

\* \* \* \* \*

**CONSENT ORDER**

On or about August 20, 2021, the Maryland State Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists (the “Board”) notified **BILAL ALI, LCPC, LCADC** (the “Respondent”) of the Board’s intent to revoke his license to practice as a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor (“LCPC”) and as a Licensed Clinical Drug and Alcohol Counselor (“LCADC”), License Numbers LC9988 and LCA2717, respectively, based on violations of the Maryland Professional Counselors and Therapists Act (the “Act”), Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. §§ 17-101 *et seq.* (2014 Repl. Vol. & 2020 Supp.) and Md. Code Regs. (“COMAR”) 10.58.03.01 *et seq.*

Specifically, the Board based its action on the Respondent’s violation of the following provisions of the Act:

**Health Occ. § 17-509. Denial, probation, suspension or revocation of trainee status, license, or certificate.**

Subject to the hearing provisions of § 17-511 of this subtitle, the Board, on the affirmative vote of a majority of its members then serving, may deny trainee status, a license, or a certificate to any applicant, place any trainee, licensee, or certificate holder on probation, reprimand any trainee, licensee, or certificate holder, or suspend, rescind, or revoke the status of any trainee, a license of any licensee, or a certificate of any certificate holder if the applicant, trainee, licensee, or certificate holder:

- (6) Willfully makes or files a false report or record in the practice of counseling or therapy;
- (7) Makes a willful misrepresentation while counseling or providing therapy;
- (8) Violates the code of ethics adopted by the Board;
- (9) Knowingly violates any provision of this title;
- ...
- (13) Violates any rule or regulation adopted by the Board; [and]
- ...
- (16) Commits an act of immoral or unprofessional conduct in the practice of clinical or nonclinical counseling or therapy[.]

Pursuant to Health Occ. § 17-509(8) and (13), the Board also based its action on the following COMAR provisions:

**COMAR 10.58.03.03 Professional Competence.**

A. A counselor shall:

- (1) Practice only within the boundaries of a counselor's competence, based on education, training, supervised experience, and professional credentials;

**COMAR 10.58.03.04 Ethical Responsibility.**

B. A counselor may not:

- ...
- (2) Participate in dishonest, fraudulent, or deceitful activity in the capacity of a counselor;

**COMAR 10.58.03.07 Advertising, Public Statements, and Media Presentations.**

A. Advertising.

...

(2) In placing advertisements or making other types of public statements, a counselor shall identify a counselor's credentials in a manner that is accurate and not false, misleading, deceptive or fraudulent.

(3) A counselor may not place advertisements or make public statements that:

(a) Contain false, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, or unfair statements or information;

...

(d) Misrepresent, either directly or by implication, a counselor's professional qualifications such as education, experience, or areas of competence;

...

(f) Contain representations or implications that in reasonable probability can be expected to cause an ordinary prudent person to misunderstand or be deceived[.]

B. Public statements.

(1) A counselor shall:

(a) Correct others who misrepresent a counselor's professional qualifications or affiliations[.]

(2) A counselor may not:

...

- (c) Claim organizational membership in a manner that suggests specialized competence, training, or qualifications that a counselor does not have[.]

On December 17, 2021 and January 28, 2022, the Respondent, represented by counsel, the Administrative Prosecutor, and representatives of the Board attended a Case Resolution Conference (“CRC”). As a result of information presented at the CRC,<sup>1</sup> the parties agreed to the following Consent Order consisting of Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order.

### **FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Board makes the following Findings of Fact:

#### **I. BACKGROUND/LICENSURE INFORMATION**

1. At all times relevant, the Respondent was licensed to practice clinical professional counseling in the State of Maryland. The Respondent was originally licensed to practice as an LCPC in the State of Maryland on October 29, 2019, under License Number LC9988. The Respondent’s LCPC license is scheduled to expire on January 31, 2023.

2. The Respondent was originally licensed to practice as a licensed clinical alcohol and drug counselor (LCADC) on July 3, 2019, under License Number LCA2717. The Respondent’s LCADC license is scheduled to expire on January 31, 2023.

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<sup>1</sup> During the January 28, 2022 CRC, Respondent presented documentation that he earned a Doctorate in Healthcare Administration from Virginia University of Lynchburg in August 2021.

3. The Respondent was originally certified to practice as a Certified Associate Alcohol and Drug Counselor (CAC-DC) on May 30, 2003. The Respondent's CAC-DC certificate was due to expire on January 31, 2021.<sup>2</sup>

4. At all times relevant, the Respondent was employed by a corporation (the "Corporation")<sup>3</sup> that operates substance abuse treatment facilities. On or about August 22, 2019, the Corporation hired the Respondent to be the Executive Director of an opioid treatment center (the "Center") with a proposed location in Baltimore, Maryland.

## II. PRIOR DISCIPLINARY HISTORY

5. On or about May 31, 2013, the Board issued disciplinary charges against the Respondent who, at the time, was certified as a CAC-AD. In its charges, the Board alleged that while employed at a drug treatment center, the Respondent breached patients' confidentiality, treated patients in a disrespectful and threatening manner, and provided inadequate supervision to his staff. The Board alleged that the Respondent's actions violated a series of provisions of the Act and COMAR regulations.

6. The Respondent resolved the Board's charges by entering into a Consent Order, dated April 25, 2014. Under the Consent Order, the Board found as a matter of law that the Respondent committed an act of immoral or unprofessional conduct in the practice of clinical or nonclinical counseling or therapy, in violation of Health Occ. § 17-509(16).

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<sup>2</sup> Due to the Governor's Emergency Order, this certificate did not expire until June 30, 2021.

<sup>3</sup> For confidentiality reasons, the name of the Respondent's employer, any opioid treatment facility with which he was affiliated and the identity of the Complainant will not be disclosed in this document.

The Board issued a reprimand against the Respondent's CAC-AD certificate and placed him on probation for at least 18 months. The Board imposed probationary terms and conditions including: a fine of \$500.00; and successful completion of Board-approved courses in ethics, clinical documentation and clinical supervision.

7. Through an order titled, *Order Lifting Probation*, dated June 3, 2016, the Board lifted the Respondent's probation and restored his certificate without further restrictions or conditions.

### **III. THE COMPLAINT**

8. On or about February 3, 2021, the Board received a complaint, dated January 28, 2021, from a licensed clinical social worker (the "Complainant") who alleged that the Respondent was "misrepresenting his professional qualifications, education, experience, and affiliation." The Complainant stated that the Respondent "introduces himself as "Dr. Ali" in his field of work . . . [which] . . . is very misleading to other professionals and the patients that he serves. It is also a misrepresentation of the other two licenses that he holds which are not at the doctorate level."

9. The Complainant stated that the Respondent represented on CMDS's website that he had an honorary doctorate from the *Global Ove Dai Seminary and University* (a.k.a., "G.O.D.S.U.") and that he was elected to the Maryland House of Delegates when in fact, he was appointed to fill an empty seat and was not re-elected.

10. The Complainant reported that she attended two public counseling-related events where the Respondent identified himself as "Dr." The Complainant stated that she first met the Respondent on February 2, 2020, at a community forum where the

Respondent, on behalf of the Corporation, was involved in proposing the opening of the Center in her neighborhood. At the forum, the Respondent introduced himself as “Dr. Ali.” The Complainant stated that on November 23, 2020, she arranged a tour of a proposed site for the Center where the Respondent again referred to himself as “Dr. Ali.”

11. The Complainant concluded her complaint by stating, “I feel that ethically [the Respondent] is misrepresenting himself and felt the Board might want to know this since this issue is included in the Code of Ethics.”

#### **IV. BOARD INVESTIGATION**

12. After receiving the complaint, the Board initiated an investigation of the Respondent under Case Number 2021-061. As part of its investigation, the Board obtained a written response from the Respondent, interviewed the Complainant and the Respondent, and inspected several Internet sites that referenced or identified the Respondent.

##### ***Respondent’s written response***

13. By certified letter dated March 5, 2021, the Board provided a copy of the above complaint to the Respondent and requested that he address the allegations that were set forth therein.

14. By letter dated March 16, 2021, the Respondent responded, stating that he “never misrepresented [himself] to any patient or to anyone else,” and that he has not “been employed for the purpose of seeing patients.” The Respondent questioned the Complainant’s motives for filing her complaint, stating, “[the Complainant] is an elderly white woman, professing concerns for the all African-American students at the school. Is there no shame in such people using their declared concern for black people in order to

promote their own, selfish objection? This elderly white woman cares nothing for those kids. Her real concern is that she does not want black drug addicts in treatment in her neighborhood.” Addressing the issue of his use of the term, “Dr.,” the Respondent stated that his employer also referred to him as “Dr. Ali.”

*Internet site review*

15. As part of this investigation, Board staff reviewed Internet websites where the Respondent is referenced.

16. On February 9, 2021, Board staff reviewed the Center’s Internet website. The website identifies the Respondent’s title as “Dr. Bilal Ali, LCAD-C, LCPC President of [the Corporation’s] Residential Programs.” In the body of the website, it is noted that the Respondent has a Bachelor of Arts degree, a master’s degree in psychology, and an “Honorary Doctorate from the Global Ove Dai Seminary and University (aka G.O.D.S.U).”<sup>4</sup>

17. On February 9, 2021, Board staff reviewed the Internet website for Psychology Today. On this website, the Respondent had a profile under the subject area of “therapists.” The site includes the Respondent’s photograph and credentials. The Respondent identifies himself on the site as “Dr. Bilal Ali and I am an LCPC and LCA

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<sup>4</sup> On its website, the Global Ove Dai Seminary and University states that among other things, it dispenses honorary degrees, which it describes as “an academic degree for which a university (or other degree-awarding institution) has waived the usual requirements, such as matriculation, residency, study and the passing of examinations. The degree is typically a doctorate and may be awarded to someone who has no prior connections with the academic institution.”



based in Baltimore City.” The Respondent did not note where he obtained the doctorate or that the doctorate was honorary in nature.<sup>5</sup>

***Email from the Respondent’s employer***

18. On March 20, 2021, Board staff received an email from the Respondent’s employer. The Respondent’s employer stated that the Complainant’s complaint was a “despicable attack against [the Respondent],” and that he intends to “file suit against [the Complainant] for defamation.” The Respondent’s employer acknowledged that he “usually introduces Bilal as Dr. Ali,” and “[w]hether I choose to refer to him as Dr. or Mr. Ali is really a matter for my choosing.”

***Interview of the Complainant***

19. On March 22, 2021, Board staff conducted an interview with the Complainant. The Complainant reaffirmed the statements she made in her complaint. The Complainant also stated that after hearing the Respondent refer to himself as “Dr.,” she contacted the Respondent’s employer and informed him that the Respondent’s use of the term was misleading and that patients in addiction care might think the Respondent was a medical doctor. The Complainant stated that upon informing the Respondent’s employer of this, the employer stated that the Complainant’s concerns “make sense.”

***Interview of the Respondent***

20. On March 22, 2021, the Board’s investigator interviewed the Respondent under oath, at which time he acknowledged that his doctorate was honorary, was obtained

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<sup>5</sup> Board staff contacted Psychology Today and confirmed that the Respondent’s posting on Psychology Today was deleted on February 25, 2021.

through G.O.D.S.U. by submitting his resume and community involvement, and did not cost anything to obtain. The Respondent stated that he did not misrepresent himself to patients as he was not seeing them at that time. The Respondent stated that his role was to oversee clinical staff. When questioned about his representations on the Psychology Today website, the Respondent stated that his listing on the Psychology Today website was a “free listing.”

***Documentary information from the Respondent’s employer***

21. On March 23, 2021, Board staff issued a *Subpoena Duces Tecum* to the Respondent’s employer. The records state that the Corporation hired the Respondent and that he began working for the Corporation in or around October 2019.

**CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concludes as a matter of law that the Respondent’s conduct, as set forth above constitutes a violation of the code of ethics adopted by the Board, *i.e.* COMAR 10.58.03.04(A)(1) and (B)(2), in violation of Health Occ. § 17-509(8); knowingly violating any provision of this title in violation of Health Occ. § 17-509(9); violating any rule or regulation adopted by the Board *i.e.* COMAR 10.58.03.04(A)(1), (B)(2) and COMAR 10.58.03.07A(2), (3)(a), (d), (f) and COMAR 10.58.03.07B(1)(a), in violation of Health Occ. § 17-509(13); and committing an act of immoral or unprofessional conduct in the practice of clinical or nonclinical counseling or therapy in violation of Health Occ. § 17-509(16).

The Board dismisses charges under: Health Occ. § 17-509(6), willfully making or filing a false report or record in the practice of counseling or therapy; and Health Occ. § 17-509(7), making a willful misrepresentation while counseling or providing therapy.

**ORDER**

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is this 18th day of March, 2022, by a majority of the quorum of the Board considering this case hereby:

**ORDERED** that the Respondent is hereby **REPRIMANDED**; and it is further

**ORDERED** that the Respondent is placed on **PROBATION** for **TWO (2) YEARS**, and continuing until the Respondent has successfully completed the following probationary conditions:

1. Within one (1) year, the Respondent shall pay a fine in the amount of one thousand (\$1,000) dollars, by certified check or money order, payable to the Maryland Board of Professional Counselors and Therapists;
2. Within one (1) year, the Respondent shall enroll in and successfully complete a Board-approved, bachelor's level course on professional ethics and provide the Board with documentation of successful completion within sixty (60) days;
3. The Respondent shall, at all times, comply with the Act and all applicable laws, statutes and regulations; and

4. The Respondent shall at all times cooperate with the Board, any of its agents or employees, and with the Board-assigned investigator, in the monitoring, supervision, and investigation of the Respondent's compliance with the terms and conditions of the Consent Order.

**AND IT IS FURTHER ORDERED** that after the completion the two (2) year probationary period, the Respondent may submit a written petition to the Board for termination of the probation, provided the Respondent has successfully completed the probationary conditions noted above. After consideration of the petition, the probation may be terminated through an order of the Board. The Board at its discretion may grant termination if the Respondent has fully and satisfactorily complied with all the terms and conditions of the Consent Order, there are no pending investigations or complaints against the Respondent, and the Board deems termination of probation appropriate; and it is further

**ORDERED** that if the Respondent fails to make any such petition, then the probationary period status may continue indefinitely, subject to the conditions set forth in this Order; and it is further

**ORDERED** that if the Board determines that the terms or conditions of this Order have not been successfully completed, after notice and opportunity for a show cause hearing before the Board, the Board may modify the terms and conditions of Respondent's probation, upon notice to the Respondent; and it is further

**ORDERED** that if the Respondent allegedly fails to comply with any term or condition of the Consent Order, the Respondent shall be given notice and an opportunity for a hearing. If, in its sole discretion, the Board determines that there is a genuine dispute

as to a material fact, the hearing shall be an evidentiary hearing before the Board. If there is no genuine dispute as to a material fact, the Respondent shall be given a show cause hearing before the Board. Prior to holding a show cause hearing or an evidentiary hearing and upon receipt of a written request by either party not later than 60 days before the scheduled hearing, the Board may hold a pre-hearing conference by telephone or videoconference no later than 30 days before the scheduled hearing to resolve matters preliminary to the hearing. The written request for a pre-hearing conference shall include a statement detailing preliminary issues including: the existence of a genuine dispute as to a material fact; legal issues; stipulations; the name and curriculum vitae of any expert witness that will testify at the hearing; a detailed written report summarizing the expert's testimony, which includes the opinion offered and the factual basis and reasons underlying the opinion; a list of witnesses to be called; discovery disputes; motions; order of presentation; and any other preliminary matter. After the appropriate hearing, if the Board determines that the Respondent has failed to comply with any term or condition of the Consent Order, the Board may reprimand the Respondent, place the Respondent on probation with appropriate terms and conditions, or suspend or revoke the Respondent's license to practice as a clinical professional counselor in Maryland. The Board may, in addition to one or more of the sanctions set forth above, impose a civil monetary fine upon the Respondent; and it is further

**ORDERED** that the Respondent shall be responsible for all costs incurred under the terms and conditions of the Consent Order; and it is further

**ORDERED** that the effective date of this Order is the date that it is signed by the Board; and it is further

**ORDERED** that the Consent Order is a Final Order and as such is a **PUBLIC RECORD** pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. §§ 4-101 *et seq.* (2014).

March 18, 2022  
Date

Mary N. Drotleff, MS, LCMFT  
Mary N. Drotleff, M.S., LCMFT  
Board Chair  
Maryland State Board of Professional  
Counselors and Therapists

**CONSENT**

I, Bilal Ali, LCPC, LCADC, by affixing my signature hereto, acknowledge that:

1. I am represented by counsel, William H. Murphy, Jr., Esquire and Kaitlyn T. Holzer, Esquire, and I have consulted with counsel in this matter. I have knowingly and voluntarily agreed to enter into this Consent Order. By this Consent and for the purpose of resolving the issues raised by the Board, I agree and accept to be bound by the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions.
2. I have knowingly and voluntarily agreed to enter into this Consent Order. By this Consent and for the purpose of resolving the issues raised by the Board, I agree and accept to be bound by the foregoing Consent Order and its conditions.
3. I am aware that I am entitled to a formal evidentiary hearing, pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. § 17-511 (2021 Repl. Vol.) and Md. Code Ann., State Gov't §§ 10-201 *et seq.* (2021 Repl. Vol.).
4. I acknowledge the validity and enforceability of this Consent Order as if entered into after the conclusion of a formal evidentiary hearing in which I would have the right to counsel, to confront witnesses, to give testimony, to call witnesses on my own behalf, and to all other substantive and procedural protections as provided by law. I am waiving those procedural and substantive protections.
5. I voluntarily enter into and agree to abide by the terms and conditions set forth herein as a resolution of the Notice of Intent to Revoke Licensure against me. I

waive any right to contest the Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, and I waive my right to a full evidentiary hearing, as set forth above, and any right to appeal this Consent Order or any adverse ruling of the Board that might have followed any such hearing.

6. I acknowledge that by failing to abide by the conditions set forth in this Consent Order, I may be subject to further disciplinary actions.
7. I sign this Consent Order voluntarily, without reservation, and I fully understand and comprehend the language, meaning and terms of this Consent Order.

2/23/22

Date

Bilal Ali

Bilal Ali, LCPC, LCADC

**NOTARY**

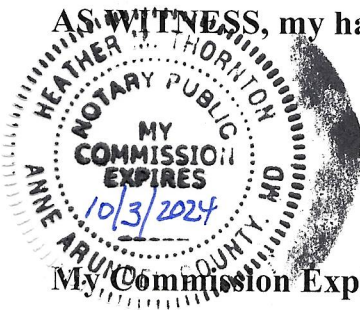
STATE OF Maryland

CITY/COUNTY OF Baltimore

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of February,

2022, before me, a Notary Public of the State and City/County aforesaid, personally appeared **Bilal Ali, LCPC, LCADC**, License Numbers LC9988 and LCA2717, and gave oath in due form of law that the foregoing Consent Order was his voluntary act and deed.

AS WITNESS, my hand and Notary Seal.



Heather M. Thornton

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 10/3/2024