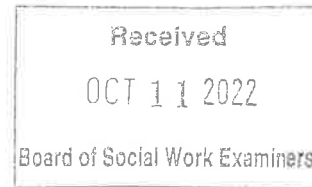


BRIDGETTE RATNAM, LCSW-C

Date: 10/6/2022

Sondra Petty, LCSW-C, LICSW
Board Chair
State Board of Social Work Examiners
4201 Patterson Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21215



RE: Surrender of Social Work License
License Number: 14852
Case Numbers: 20-2838; 20-2847; and 20-2848

Dear Ms. Petty and Members of the Board:

Please be advised that I have decided to **SURRENDER** my license to practice social work in the State of Maryland, License Number: 14852 effective immediately. I understand that upon surrender of my license, I may not practice social work, with or without compensation, or otherwise engage in the practice of social work in the State of Maryland as it is defined in the Maryland Social Workers Act (the "Act"), Md. Code Ann., Health Occupations. ("Health Occ.") §§ 19-101 *et seq.*, (2021 Repl. Vol.) and other applicable laws. In other words, as of the effective date of this Letter of Surrender, I understand that I am in the same position as an unlicensed individual in the State of Maryland.

I understand that this Letter of Surrender is a **PUBLIC DOCUMENT**, and, on the Board's, acceptance becomes a **FINAL ORDER** of the Board.

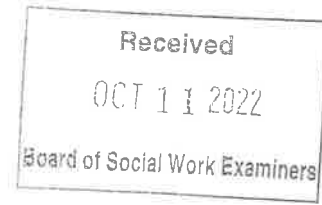
My decision to surrender my license to practice social work in the State of Maryland has been prompted by an investigation of my license by the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board"). The results of the investigation led the Board to issue disciplinary charges against me on or about June 6, 2021, under Case Numbers: 20-2838; 20-2838; and 20-2848.

I have decided to surrender my license to practice social work in the State of Maryland to avoid further prosecution of the disciplinary charges now pending before the Board. I acknowledge that the Board initiated an investigation of this matter and issued disciplinary charges against me under the Act.

After its investigation, the Board charged me with violating the following:

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Bridgette Ratnam, LCSW-C
Letter of Surrender
License No.: 14852
Case Numbers: 20-2838; 20-2847; and 20-2848
Page 2 of 6



Health. Occ. §§ 19-311:

- (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:

Md. Code Regs. ("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.

....
D. The licensee may not engage in sexual misconduct with either current or former clients.

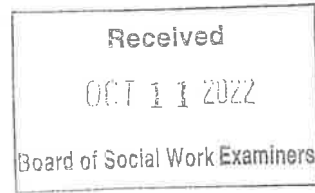
....
F. The licensee may not terminate professional services or a professional relationship with a client in order to enter into a nonprofessional, social, or sexual relationship with the client or an individual with whom the client has a personal relationship.

.06 Standards of Practice.

....
B. A licensee may not:
(1) Undertake or continue a professional relationship with a client when the competence or objectivity of the licensee is or could reasonably be expected to be impaired due to:

....
(b) The licensee's present or previous familial, social, sexual, emotional, financial, supervisory, political, administrative, legal, or other relationship with the client or a person associated with or related to the client; or
(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[.]

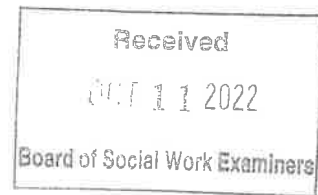
I acknowledge that the Board issued Charges Under the Maryland Social Workers



Act (the "Charging Document") based on my conduct as a licensed master social worker. I also acknowledge that the Board's investigation revealed the following information as alleged in the Charging Document:

- a. On or about April 1, 2019, a client (the "Client") began therapy sessions with the Respondent. The Client met with the Respondent for therapy at least day one per week.
- b. In or around October 2019, the Client began telling the Respondent that he had romantic feelings for her. The Client's patient records revealed during the month of October 2019, the Client had four therapy sessions with the Respondent -October 1, 8, 14, and 29, 2019. The Respondent and the Client ended their therapy sessions on October 29, 2019.
- c. After the Client expressed his romantic feelings for her, the Respondent claims that she immediately sought guidance and input from various sources on what action she should take. After seeking advice, the Respondent claims that she told the Client she did not share the same romantic feelings for him, and the feelings would never be reciprocated by her. The Respondent also claims she gave the Client handouts and internet resources to assist him in processing his feelings about her.
- d. In early November 2019, following the termination of the Client's therapy sessions, the Respondent and the Client began a romantic relationship.
- e. In December 2019, the Client moved in with Respondent. The Client moved out of the Respondent's home in July 2020, but they continued to maintain a romantic relationship.
- f. On or about October 20, 2020, the Respondent was interviewed under oath by Board staff. During her interview with Board staff, the Respondent admitted that she became romantically involved with the Client in early November 2019, following the October 29, 2019, termination of Client's therapy sessions. The Respondent also admitted that the Client moved into her home in December 2019. The

Bridgette Ratnam, LCSW-C
Letter of Surrender
License No.: 14852
Case Numbers: 20-2838; 20-2847; and 20-2848
Page 4 of 6



Respondent further admitted that she and Client were still in a romantic relationship, even though the Client had moved out of her home in July 2020.

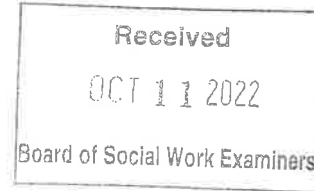
I wish to make clear that I have voluntarily, knowingly, and freely chosen to submit this Letter of Surrender to avoid prosecution of the aforementioned charges under the Act. I acknowledge that if the case were to proceed to an evidentiary hearing, the State would be able to prove by a preponderance of the evidence that I violated the Act as charged. I acknowledge that for all purposes relevant to my licensure, the Board's investigative findings will be treated as if proven.

I understand that the Board will advise the National Practitioners' Data Bank of this Letter of Surrender, and in any response to any inquiry, that I have surrendered my license in lieu of further disciplinary action under the Act. I also understand that in the event I would apply for license in any form in any other state or jurisdiction, that this Letter of Surrender and the underlying investigative documents including the Charging Document 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., State Govt., § 10-611 et seq., (2021 Repl. Vol.), and that this Letter of Surrender is considered a disciplinary action by the Board.

I understand that by executing this Letter of Surrender I am waiving any right to contest the charges 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 affirm that on or before the date of Board's acceptance of this Letter of Surrender, I will provide to Board staff my social work licenses. If I apply for reinstatement of my Maryland social license, the Board has full discretion to grant or deny my reinstatement. If the Board does grant reinstatement, it may impose any terms and conditions the Board considers appropriate for public safety and the protection of the integrity and reputation of the profession. I understand that when applying for reinstatement, I will approach the Board in the same posture as one whose license has been revoked. I also understand that if I apply for reinstatement, I bear the burden of demonstrating my professional competence and fitness to practice social work to the satisfaction of the Board. If the Board denies my application for reinstatement of my license, I do not have the right to a hearing or to appeal the Board's decision.

Bridgette Ratnam, LCSW-C
Letter of Surrender
License No.: 14852
Case Numbers: 20-2838; 20-2847; and 20-2848
Page 5 of 6



I understand that I may not rescind this Letter of Surrender in part or in its entirety for any reason whatsoever. Finally, I wish to make clear that I have been advised of my right to be represented by the attorney of my choice throughout proceedings before the Board, including the right to counsel with an attorney prior to signing this Letter of Surrender. I understand both the nature of the Board's actions and this Letter of Surrender fully. I acknowledge that I understand and comprehend the language, meaning and terms and effect of this Letter of Surrender. I voluntarily choose to surrender my Maryland license to practice social work pursuant to the terms and conditions set out herein. I make this decision knowingly and voluntarily.

Very truly yours,
Bridgette Ratnam, LCSW-C
Bridgette Ratnam, LCSW-C

NOTARY

STATE OF MARYLAND
CITY/COUNTY OF Laurel / Prince Georges

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 6th day of October
2022, before me, a Notary Public of the State and City/County aforesaid,
personally appeared, **BRIDGETTE RATNAM, LCSW-C**, License Number: 14852 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.

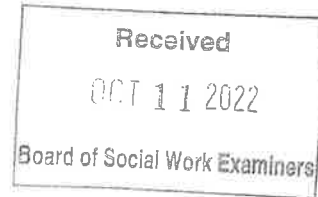
[Signature]

Notary Public

My Commission expires: Nov 02, 2022

MI JUNG KIM
NOTARY PUBLIC STATE OF MARYLAND
My Commission Expires Nov 02, 2022
Montgomery County

Bridgette Ratnam, LCSW-C
Letter of Surrender
License No.: 14852
Case Numbers: 20-2838; 20-2847; and 20-2848
Page 6 of 6



ACCEPTANCE

On this 14th day of October, 2022, I, Sondra Petty, Board Chair, on behalf of the Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners, accept the **SURRENDER** of the license of **Bridgett Ratnam** to practice social work in the State of Maryland.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Sondra Petty, LCSW-C, LICSW".

Sondra Petty, LCSW-C, LICSW
Board Chair
Maryland State Board of Social Work Examiners