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In the
Supreme Court of Georgia

No. S26Y0667

In the Matter of Richard Linwood Parsons

Decided: July 7, 2026

PER CURIAM.

This disciplinary matter is before the Court on the report and recommendation of Special Master Adam Hames, filed pursuant to Bar Rule 4-106(e). In the report, the Special Master recommends that the Court disbar Respondent Richard Linwood Parsons (State Bar No. 882961), who has been a member of the Bar since 2012, for his violation of Rule 8.4(a)(2) of the Georgia Rules of Professional Conduct (GRPC). Rule 8.4(a)(2), which is found in Bar Rule 4-102(d), provides that it is a violation of the GRPC for a lawyer to be convicted of a felony. The maximum penalty for a violation of Rule 8.4(a)(2) is disbarment. Neither Parsons nor the Bar has sought review by the Review Board or filed exceptions to the Special Master's report, so the matter is now ripe for this Court's review. Based on the record before this Court, we conclude that disbarment is appropriate in this case.

On August 4, 2025, in a New Jersey court, Parsons pleaded guilty to one count of endangering the welfare of children in the third degree in violation of N.J.S.A. 2C:24-4(a)(1); three other

counts were dismissed.¹ See *State of New Jersey v. Richard Parsons*, No. 24-04-0279-I (Mercer County Superior Court). New Jersey’s statutes authorize a sentence of between three and five years for the crime for which Parsons was convicted. See N.J.S.A. 2C:43-6(a)(3). Shortly after, the State Bar initiated disciplinary proceedings under Bar Rule 4-106 on the basis that Parsons’s conviction would be a felony in Georgia. See OCGA § 16-1-3(5) (felony in Georgia includes any crime punishable by imprisonment for more than 12 months). This Court appointed a Special Master, and Parsons acknowledged service of the petition and the order of appointment of the Special Master.

The Special Master held a hearing at which Parsons stipulated to his guilty plea in New Jersey; to having been sentenced to time served, followed by life on parole, with sex offender registration requirements; and to violating Rule 8.4(a)(2) by virtue of his conviction. Although Parsons declined the opportunity to present argument or evidence as to aggravating or mitigating factors, his attorney represented that Parsons had taken steps to wrap up his law practice, including withdrawing from his cases and disbursing funds from his IOLTA account. The Bar noted that Parsons had no prior disciplinary history.

The Special Master then issued his report and recommendation, relaying the above facts and applying the framework set out in the *ABA Standards for Imposing Lawyer Sanctions* (1992) (“ABA Standards”). See ABA Standard 3.0 (when imposing a sanction, “a court should consider the following factors: (a) the duty violated; (b) the lawyer’s mental state; (c) the potential or

¹ The count to which he pleaded guilty accused him of engaging in sexually explicit conversations that would “impair or debauch the morals of a child” whom he believed to be fourteen years old.

actual injury caused by the lawyer's misconduct; and (d) the existence of aggravating or mitigating factors"). Noting that all parties agreed that this disciplinary matter implicated ABA Standard 5.1 (Failure to Maintain Personal Integrity), the Special Master concluded that the crime to which Parsons pleaded guilty was a felony involving "serious criminal conduct"; required proof that Parsons acted knowingly; and by its very "nature ha[d] the potential for incredible injury."

The Special Master then addressed aggravating and mitigating factors, concluding, in mitigation, that Parsons lacked a disciplinary history and that he had been cooperative in this disciplinary matter, see ABA Standard 9.32(a) and (e), and, in aggravation, that Parsons's criminal actions were fueled by a selfish motive and that Parsons engaged in illegal conduct, ABA Standard 9.22(b) and (k).

Although the Special Master noted that most attorneys who have been disbarred under Rule 8.4(a)(2) engaged in crimes of violence, drugs, or financial misdeeds, he reasoned that Parsons's crime was still serious, and he noted that the public would quickly lose confidence in the legal system if a person who was convicted of a sex crime directed at a child, real or perceived, was allowed to continue practicing law. See *In the Matter of Blich*, 288 Ga. 690, 692 (2011) (while the "primary purpose of a disciplinary action is to protect the public from attorneys who are not qualified to practice law due to incompetence or unprofessional conduct," the Court is also concerned about protecting the public's confidence in the legal system). Ultimately, the Special Master recommended disbarment as the appropriate discipline for Parsons's violation of Rule 8.4(a)(2). See *In the Matter of Madison*, 300 Ga. 637, 639 (2017) (disbarring attorney who violated Bar

Rule 4-102(a)(2) by virtue of his felony child molestation conviction; rejecting attorney’s argument that disbarment was inappropriate because his conviction “in no way implicated his relationship with clients”); see also *In the Matter of Jones*, 320 Ga. 448, 448 (2024) (accepting voluntary surrender of license from attorney who violated Rule 8.4(a)(2) by virtue of his guilty plea conviction to two felony charges of possession of child pornography); *In the Matter of Smith*, 282 Ga. 626, 626 (2007) (accepting voluntary surrender of license from attorney who violated Rule 8.4(a)(2) by virtue of his guilty plea conviction to five counts of felony child molestation). Parsons filed no exceptions to the Special Master’s report.

We have reviewed the record in this case and agree that disbarment is the appropriate sanction in this matter. Accordingly, it is hereby ordered that the name of Richard Linwood Parsons be removed from the rolls of persons authorized to practice law in the State of Georgia. Parsons is reminded of his duties pursuant to Bar Rule 4-219(b).

Disbarred. All the Justices concur.