

MARYLAND BOARD OF INDIVIDUAL *
TAX PREPARERS

v.

LYNERA P. SPARKS,
Respondent

BEFORE THE MARYLAND BOARD OF
INDIVIDUAL TAX PREPARERS

CASE NO.: MITP-18-0012

* * * * *

CONSENT ORDER

The Maryland Board of Individual Tax Preparers (the "Board") opened a complaint in this matter against Lynera P. Sparks (the "Respondent"), a registered tax preparer, as a result of a referral by the Maryland Office of the Comptroller (the "Comptroller"). Upon review of the complaint and a subsequent investigation, the Board determined that administrative charges were appropriate. On or about November 15, 2017, the Board issued a Notice of Charges and Order for Hearing against the Respondent based on alleged violations of the Maryland Individual Tax Preparers Act. Prior to the scheduled administrative hearing on the charges, the parties reached an agreement to resolve this matter by means of this Consent Order. The parties enter into this Consent Order as a full and final resolution of this matter, with terms as follows:

THE PARTIES AGREE AND STIPULATE:

1. At all times relevant to the matters set forth in this Consent Order, the Respondent was registered by the Board as an individual tax preparer and/or the Board had jurisdiction over the subject matter.
2. The Respondent became registered in Maryland as an individual tax preparer on or about December 13, 2011 (Registration No. 1173). The registration was subsequently renewed and was due to expire on December 13, 2017, however, the Board retained jurisdiction for disciplinary purposes pursuant to Md. Ann. Code, Business Occupations and Professions Article ("BOP"), § 21-314 as a result of the pending charges in this matter.
3. The Respondent was required to pass the Maryland Individual Tax Preparers Examination given by the Board by December 31, 2015 in order to remain qualified to hold a registration. The Respondent has not passed the examination to date.
4. Due to her failure to pass the required examination, the Respondent has not been qualified to hold a registration since December 31, 2015.
5. From approximately January 19, 2016 through April 20, 2017, the Respondent filed Maryland individual tax returns (Form 502) as a professional tax preparer on behalf of individual taxpayers while not qualified to hold a registration.

6. Based on the aforementioned facts, the Respondent admits to violations of Md. Ann. Code, Business Occupations and Professions Article ("BOP"), §§ 21-302(a), 21-302(e), 21-311(a)(5), 21-311(a)(6), COMAR 09.38.01.02(B), and COMAR 09.38.01.05(A)(1) which provide as follows:

Section 21-302. Qualifications.

- (a) In general. - To qualify for a registration, the applicant shall be an individual who meets the requirements of this section.
- (e) Examination. - Except as otherwise provided in this subtitle, the applicant shall pass an examination given by the Board under this subtitle.

Section 21-311. Denial, suspension, revocation of registration; reprimands; penalties.

- (a) In general. - Subject to the hearing provisions of § 21-312 of this subtitle, the Board, on the affirmative vote of a majority of its members then serving, may deny a registration
 - (5) violates any regulation adopted under this title; or
 - (6) violates any provision of this title.

COMAR 09.38.01.02 The Examination.

- B. After December 31, 2015, an individual shall pass the Examination given by the Board in order to qualify for a registration unless the individual meets the requirements of § D of this regulation.

COMAR 09.38.01.05 Code of Professional Conduct.

- A. Responsibilities and Practices.
 - (1) An individual tax preparer may not commit any act that reflects adversely on the individual tax preparer's fitness to provide individual tax preparation services.

7. The Respondent agrees that her registration to provide services as an individual tax preparer shall be immediately **suspended** and shall remain in a suspended status until such time as she passes the Board's required examination and complies with the terms and conditions of this Consent Order regarding payment of the civil penalty and completion of CPE credits.

8. As a result of her violations, the Respondent agrees to pay a total civil penalty in the amount of **\$1500.00** to the Board in accordance with the following schedule:

- a) There shall be ten (10) consecutive monthly payments in the amount of \$150.00 each;
- b) The first of said payments shall be due on February 1, 2018 with remaining payments due on the first day of each month thereafter, respectively, until such time as the total penalty amount has been paid in full;
- c) In the event that the Respondent fails to make any payment in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Consent Order, her registration shall be immediately and automatically suspended until such time as compliance occurs; and
- d) The Respondent is required to make the first payment due under this paragraph 8 in the amount of \$150.00 prior to having her registration reinstated by the Board.

9. In addition, the Respondent shall obtain 4 continuing professional education (CPE) credits in the subject matter area of Practitioner Ethics prior to having her registration reinstated by the Board. The CPE credits obtained in accordance with this paragraph shall be above and beyond any normal statutory or regulatory CPE requirements and shall not be credited toward any future renewal period. The Respondent shall promptly furnish documentary evidence of satisfactory completion of the CPE training to the Board.

10. The Respondent shall abide by the provisions of the Maryland Individual Tax Preparers Act and applicable regulations in all relevant future activities.

11. The Respondent, by entering into this Consent Order, expressly waives the right to an administrative hearing on the charges and the making of Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, any and all further proceedings before the Board to which the Respondent may otherwise be entitled in this matter, and any rights to appeal from this Order.

12. The Respondent enters into this Consent Order freely, knowingly and voluntarily, and with the opportunity to seek advice of counsel.

BASED ON THESE STIPULATIONS, IT IS, THIS 29 DAY OF January, 2018 BY THE MARYLAND BOARD OF INDIVIDUAL TAX PREPARERS:

ORDERED that the Respondent has violated BOP, §§ 21-302(a), 21-302(e), 21-311(a)(5), 21-311(a)(6), COMAR 09.38.01.02(B), and COMAR 09.38.01.05(A)(1);

AND IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Respondent's registration to provide services as an individual tax preparer is hereby **SUSPENDED** in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 7 of this Consent Order;

AND IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Respondent shall pay a civil penalty in the amount of **\$1500.00** to the Board in accordance with the provisions of Paragraph 8 of this Consent

Order;

AND IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that the Respondent shall take **4 hours of CPE credits** in accordance with the provisions of paragraph 9 of this Consent Order which shall be in addition to, and shall not be credited toward, the normal CPE requirements;


AND IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this matter shall be resolved in accordance with the terms of this Consent Order, and that the same shall be reflected among the records of the Board;

AND IT IS FURTHER ORDERED that this Consent Order shall constitute a Final Order of the Maryland Board of Individual Tax Preparers.

Signature of File

Signature of File


Lynera P. Sparks
Respondent


Amy P. Hennen, Chair
Maryland Board of Individual
Tax Preparers

1/2/18
Date

1/29/18
Date