

**FILED**

No. A26-0503

March 24, 2026

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**APPEAL FROM DECISION OF THE MINNESOTA  
STATE BOARD OF LAW EXAMINERS**

**OFFICE OF  
APPELLATE COURTS**

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**State of Minnesota  
IN SUPREME COURT**

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In re Application of  
Lawrence Justin Mills,

*Applicant.*

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***CORRECTED* PETITION FOR REVIEW OF MINNESOTA BOARD OF  
LAW EXAMINERS' DECISION FILED MARCH 18, 2026**

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## ISSUES

1. Whether the Board erred by treating Mr. Mills' civil litigation as character-and-fitness misconduct and as an abuse of legal process under Rule 5, and by labeling that litigation "vexatious," "meritless," and "false allegations," absent any judicial finding that his filings were improper, frivolous, abusive, brought in bad faith, or otherwise inappropriate for adjudication, even though later judicial decisions treated the underlying matters as proper for adjudication.
2. Whether the Board misapplied Rule 5B(4) and Rule 5B(5) by failing to weigh the required factors bearing on present character and fitness and rehabilitation after concluding that Mr. Mills' civil litigation was abusive, including the remoteness of the principal alcohol-related conduct, Mr. Mills' age at the time, his completion of inpatient treatment and years of lawful conduct, his candor and cooperation with the Board, his positive social contributions, and the strong professional character evidence submitted on his behalf.
3. Whether, at minimum, the record warrants conditional admission under Rule 16 rather than outright denial, where any Rule 5 concerns arise from past conduct but Mr. Mills' current record evidences rehabilitation and an ability to meet the essential eligibility requirements for the practice of law.

## FACTS AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY<sup>1</sup>

Lawrence Justin Mills is 34 years old. He earned an associate degree from Montgomery College, his bachelor's degree from the University of Baltimore in 2017, and his J.D. from Lincoln Memorial University Duncan School of Law in 2022. He has worked as a law clerk at the Law Office of Harris S. Ammerman since May 2024, applied to the Minnesota Board of Law Examiners on November 30, 2024, and passed the February 2025 Minnesota bar examination with a score of 290. Findings 2-8.

The record includes strong professional character evidence from Matthew R. Lyon, Vice President and Dean of Lincoln Memorial University Duncan School of Law; Harris S. Ammerman, the attorney supervising Mr. Mills' legal work; William Kirtley, managing partner of the international arbitration firm Aceris Law; and Maurice Jefferson, Assistant Section Chief Deputy Attorney General of New Jersey. Dean Lyon's endorsement is especially significant because it was submitted after the Board's adverse determination and with knowledge of the matters at issue here. He described Mr. Mills as "engaged with the material, inquisitive, and prepared" and

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1. References in this Petition use standard abbreviations as follows:
    - Tr. \_\_ refers to pages in the December 9, 2025 hearing transcript.
    - Finding \_\_ refers to the paragraphs of the Board's Findings of Fact.
    - Conclusion \_\_ refers to the paragraphs of the Board's Conclusions of Law.

expressed confidence that he understands “the importance of candor and complete honesty in all of his dealings as an attorney.” Mr. Ammerman, who has supervised Mr. Mills since May 2024 and was aware of both Mr. Mills’ past history and his present conduct, testified that Mr. Mills is capable, skilled, responsible, trustworthy, and ready for the practice of law, and later wrote that he was “absolutely convinced” Mr. Mills possesses the requisite moral character and fitness to practice law. Kirtley described Mr. Mills as “honest, trustworthy and reliable,” and Jefferson wrote that he has a “developed moral compass” and will be an attorney in whom the bar “will have pride.” Ex. 37; Findings 4, 118, 123-124, 130(a), 131(b); Tr. 18:20-30:11.

Mr. Mills’ principal alcohol-related misconduct occurred approximately fifteen years ago, when he was 19 and 20 years old. In his narrative statement and supplemental disclosures, he acknowledged that he drank excessively during that period, recognized the wrongfulness of that conduct, and explained that the second DUI and the public-intoxication incident prompted lasting change. He voluntarily enrolled in 31 days of intensive inpatient treatment to address his drinking. Finding 40; Tr. 60:16–21. He redirected his life toward school and civic contribution and described himself as “deeply ashamed” of who he was during that period. The record further reflects that the March 2019 reckless-driving matter after alcohol consumption was an isolated lapse. In the

years since, the record reflects no repetition of that conduct and no further traffic incidents. Findings 23, 31, 33–34, 40–41; Tr. 40:21–23, 60:16–61:15.

The record also reflects substantial evidence of present stability, responsibility, and service. During and after law school, Mr. Mills engaged in substantial volunteer and public-serving activities, including assisting immigrant families, supporting environmental litigation, speaking with students at Bowie State University about law school and legal careers, producing a documentary concerning the Salvadoran civil war for human-rights education, and helping preserve Holocaust-survivor testimony. His narrative statement also documented more recent public-health and public-interest legal work under attorney supervision. Findings 122, 124, 125(d); Tr. 91:11–93:17.

The Board also relied on a 2022 academic-integrity matter and on omissions from Mr. Mills’ 2018 law-school application concerning certain civil matters. The academic-integrity matter was resolved as reckless, not willful, conduct. Mr. Mills later testified that the 2018 omissions were inadvertent, and the omitted matters were later disclosed to the Board in Minnesota. Findings 71, 74–76, 88–89; Tr. 53:25–59:5, 93:18–94:15.

Throughout the Board’s investigation, Mr. Mills provided repeated supplemental disclosures, narrative explanations, and additional documentation; affirmatively disclosed the academic-integrity matter in

response to multiple application questions; and documented repeated efforts to obtain records that agencies reported were unavailable. Findings 15-16, 50, 54, 57, 87, 101. After the Board had marked one request “Completed,” Mr. Mills reopened the portal item to upload additional documentation because he wanted to ensure that the Board had all relevant records. Finding 62. After the Board’s adverse determination, he continued making supplemental submissions to the record. Finding 129.

On June 23, 2025, the Board issued an adverse determination citing the 2022 academic-integrity matter, omissions from the 2018 law-school application, older criminal and driving history, Mr. Mills’ civil litigation history, and the California adverse moral-character determination. Finding 9. The Board stated that those matters raised concerns regarding Mr. Mills’ honesty and candor and his ability to conduct himself with respect for and in accordance with the law. Mr. Mills timely requested a hearing, which was held on December 9, 2025. Findings 10-12. At the formal hearing, Mr. Mills testified on all matters raised by the Board and was cross-examined. Mr. Ammerman testified on Mr. Mills’ behalf, and the Board offered no witnesses in response. On February 26, 2026, the Board issued its final decision denying admission, declining to recommend Mr. Mills to the Minnesota Supreme Court for admission, and imposing a three-year reapplication period. Determination at 60. This timely petition followed.

## STANDARD OF REVIEW

This Court reviews the record and the Board's findings independently, because "the ultimate determination of admission to the Bar is reserved to this court alone." *In re Zbiegien*, 433 N.W.2d 871, 874 (Minn. 1988). The Court generally gives weight to the Board's factual findings, particularly where the Board has fairly reviewed the record and its findings are supported by that record. *Id.*; *In re Cunningham*, 502 N.W.2d 53, 57 (Minn. 1993). But denial of bar admission must rest on conduct bearing a rational connection to present fitness to practice law. *Schware v. Bd. of Bar Exam'rs of N.M.*, 353 U.S. 232, 239 (1957).

The applicant bears the burden of proving good character and fitness by clear and convincing evidence. Minn. R. Admis. Bar 5B(2), 15D. In assessing that burden, the Board must weigh the factors identified in Rule 5B, including age at the time of the conduct, remoteness, seriousness, underlying circumstances, candor in the admissions process, evidence of rehabilitation, positive social contributions, recent conduct indicating present fitness, and changes in behavior showing a reduced likelihood of recurrence. Minn. R. Admis. Bar 5B(4)-(5); *In re Haukebo*, 352 N.W.2d 752, 754-56 (Minn. 1984).

## ARGUMENT

**I. APPLICANT HAS CARRIED HIS BURDEN OF PROVING GOOD CHARACTER AND FITNESS TO PRACTICE LAW BY CLEAR AND CONVINCING EVIDENCE.**

This case concerns only the disputed character-and-fitness element. The remaining admission requirements are not in dispute.

The Board did not deny admission for lack of rehabilitation evidence. Rather, it denied admission after assigning insufficient weight to substantial evidence that Rule 5B required it to consider. The record showed remote alcohol-related misconduct occurring approximately fifteen years ago, no further charges or traffic incidents since 2019, strong professional endorsements from attorneys and legal educators with full knowledge of the matters at issue, supervised legal work, substantial public-serving contributions, candor and cooperation during the admissions process, and an academic-integrity matter resolved as reckless rather than intentional misconduct. Instead of fairly weighing those factors, the Board treated Mr. Mills' civil litigation as if it were disqualifying and allowed that view to drive both its candor analysis and its rehabilitation analysis.

The Board's decision does not reflect a fair application of the Rule 5B factors. It assigned overwhelming negative weight to litigation that no court found frivolous, abusive, vexatious, or brought in bad faith; it relied on mischaracterizations of the record in assessing candor; and those errors led it to discount otherwise substantial evidence of rehabilitation and present



fitness. In that respect, this case is unlike *Cunningham*, where the Court deferred to a Board decision that had fairly reviewed the facts and produced findings supported by the record. 502 N.W.2d at 57. Here, the findings that drove the denial do not fairly reflect the full record.

As the record now stands, Mr. Mills satisfies every admission requirement except the disputed character-and-fitness element, and the evidence on that element is sufficient. He presented strong professional character testimony, including from his supervising attorney and law school dean; he showed sustained reform from remote alcohol-related misconduct; he demonstrated years of lawful conduct and supervised legal work; and he documented meaningful civic and public-interest contributions.

The Board's errors fall into three principal categories. First, it treated civil litigation as character misconduct and recast proper advocacy as "vexatious," "meritless," or "false." Second, it misapplied Rules 5B(4) and 5B(5) by failing to give meaningful weight to the evidence of rehabilitation, remoteness, age, current conduct, and positive social contribution. Third, it overstated the significance of the law-school nondisclosure, the 2022 academic-integrity matter, and the California determination while disregarding record evidence of candor and cooperation in the present admissions proceeding. Once those errors are corrected, the record establishes that Mr. Mills has carried his burden.

### **A. Alcohol-Related Conduct and Traffic History.**

Mr. Mills' criminal and traffic history does not warrant denial of admission on this record. His principal alcohol-related misconduct occurred approximately fifteen years ago, when he was 19 and 20 years old. In his written submissions to the Board, he did not minimize that conduct. To the contrary, he described it as "entirely unacceptable," wrote that reading the police reports from that period was "difficult" because they were "a stark reminder of how senselessly I acted at that time," and stated: "I am deeply ashamed of how I acted during that incident and, more broadly, of how I was during that period of my life." Applicant's Narrative Statement, Applicant Copy (Pt. 2) at 1210–11.

The record also reflects concrete steps toward rehabilitation. After the 2011 offenses, he voluntarily enrolled in and completed intensive inpatient treatment, redirected his life toward school and civic contribution, and then pursued his associate's degree, bachelor's degree, and law degree. Finding 40; Tr. 60:16–21. The March 2019 reckless-driving matter was an isolated lapse—the only time since 2012 that Mr. Mills had consumed alcohol before driving—and the record reflects no repetition of that mistake in the years since. Since 2019, he has had no further traffic incidents or similar issues. Finding 23; Tr. 60:22–61:15.

That record is reinforced by the hearing testimony. Over the course of working closely with Mr. Mills, Mr. Ammerman found him consistently reliable and available, had no concerns about his judgment or character, and testified that he had never observed Mr. Mills under the influence. Tr. 18:20–30:11. Mr. Mills also testified to the lessons he drew from that period, including public safety, accountability, and financial responsibility. Tr. 62:10–65:10.

This is not the kind of “serious, recent, and continuing” conduct that precluded a finding of rehabilitation in *Petition of Brown*, 467 N.W.2d 622, 624 (Minn. 1991). It instead fits the forward-looking analysis reflected in *In re Haukebo*, 352 N.W.2d 752, 756 (Minn. 1984), which recognized that alcohol-related misconduct does not justify denial where the applicant presents evidence of rehabilitation and present fitness. Here, the conduct was remote, it occurred when Mr. Mills was very young, he accepted responsibility for it, he undertook intensive treatment, and the record shows no comparable recurrence in the years since, including during and after law school.

**B. Mr. Mills’ Civil Litigation Does Not Support Denial of Admission.**

The Board treated Mr. Mills’ civil litigation history as a present character-and-fitness defect, characterizing it as “vexatious,” “meritless,” and a “misuse of the legal process.” But no court found his suits frivolous, brought in bad faith, improper, or otherwise sanctionable. The Board’s characterization

instead rested largely on its own view of the filings, especially the mandamus actions, rather than on any judicial finding of abuse.

**1. Rule 5B Does Not Permit the Board to Equate Lawful Civil Litigation with Abuse of Process or Present Unfitness.**

The Board's analysis collapsed several distinct concepts into one. It treated the existence of civil litigation, the fact that some claims were dismissed, and Mr. Mills' persistence in pursuing legal remedies as though those things themselves established present unfitness. Rule 5B asks instead about present character and fitness, informed by rehabilitation and current conduct—not whether the Board subjectively disapproves of an applicant's resort to the courts.

That distinction matters here. Civil litigation is not itself misconduct. Nor does the mere fact that litigation is persistent establish that it is abusive or brought in bad faith. Courts decide claims on many grounds, including pleading defects, jurisdictional issues, immunity doctrines, and merits rulings that do not imply misconduct by the party who filed them. The Board therefore could not infer present unfitness merely from the fact that Mr. Mills pursued civil claims, persisted in seeking judicial relief, or continued litigating after setbacks.

This Court has cautioned against treating the lawful exercise of a legal right as itself evidence of unfitness. In *Application of Gahan*, the Court

explained that the fact of filing bankruptcy could not itself be labeled “immoral” or “irresponsible”; the inquiry had to focus on the applicant’s underlying conduct. 279 N.W.2d 826, 828-29 (Minn. 1979). The same principle applies here. The Board could not simply take Mr. Mills’ resort to the courts and redefine that resort itself as “misuse of the legal process.” That would substitute subjective disapproval of litigation for an actual showing of present character defect.

**2. The Record Does Not Support the Board’s Characterization of Mr. Mills’ Litigation as “Vexatious,” “Meritless,” or a “Misuse of the Legal Process.”**

The record does not show a pattern of frivolous, abusive, sanctionable, or bad-faith litigation. Instead, it shows resort to ordinary legal process to pursue claims—some unsuccessful, others successful—without the sort of judicial findings that would support the Board’s characterization. No court found Mr. Mills’ suits frivolous or brought in bad faith, and the Board cited no sanctions. That absence matters. This Court has rejected the inference the Board drew here: “The mere fact that the court eventually dismissed a number of plaintiffs’ claims in no way proves these were groundless or brought in bad faith.” *Advanced Training Sys., Inc. v. Caswell Equip. Co.*, 352 N.W.2d 1, 12 (Minn. 1984).

The objective record is inconsistent with the Board’s description.<sup>2</sup> The PPE Casino action, for example, produced a ruling that the casino defendants “had no legal justification” to deprive Mr. Mills of his liberty and later resulted in a \$215,000 settlement. The 2017 New Jersey matter likewise resulted in summary judgment and a \$285,000 settlement. A litigation history that includes favorable rulings and substantial settlements cannot fairly be reduced to a pattern of “meritless” or abusive litigation.

### **3. The Board Improperly Used Current Civil Litigation to Negate Rehabilitation.**

The Board’s own decision shows that it treated current litigation not merely as part of a historical record, but as affirmative evidence that rehabilitation had failed. In discussing Rule 5B(5), the Board wrote that Mr. Mills’ current actions “contradict” rehabilitation and that he “continues to engage in the troubling conduct noted herein, including vexatious litigation.” It further stated that Applicant “seems to believe that being sanctioned by a court is required for the Board to consider the litigation inappropriate.” That

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<sup>2</sup> The Board’s references to the civil action arising from the 2019 Delaware stop and the Airbnb arbitration reinforce the same point. Neither matter resulted in any sanction or any finding that Mr. Mills’ claim was frivolous, abusive, or brought in bad faith. In the Delaware matter, counsel identified material inconsistencies between the officer’s statements and the video evidence, and the case later settled in Mr. Mills’ favor. The Airbnb arbitration was resolved on contractual grounds, not on any finding that the claim itself was improper.

framing makes clear that the Board used current civil litigation itself to negate rehabilitation.

That analysis centered on *Mills v. Leguen*, which the Board specifically identified in both the initial adverse determination and the final decision as a current character-and-fitness concern. But *Leguen* was a constitutional challenge to Nevada’s casino-smoking exemption—a form of public-interest litigation, not evidence of character defect. The Board did not merely note that *Leguen* had been dismissed. It specifically emphasized that the matter was dismissed on “multiple grounds,” including qualified immunity, and that Mr. Mills had appealed, in order to suggest that he “continues to engage in the troubling conduct noted herein, including vexatious litigation.”<sup>3</sup> But dismissal on multiple grounds, including immunity doctrines, followed by appellate review, does not itself establish vexatiousness, abuse of process, or present unfitness. Those are ordinary features of constitutional claims.

Rule 5B(5) expressly contemplates current conduct and positive social contribution as relevant to rehabilitation. The Board inverted that framework by treating current public-interest litigation itself as proof that the supposed

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<sup>3</sup> A closely analogous challenge to New Jersey’s casino-smoking exemption was recently remanded for further proceedings after the Appellate Division concluded that the lower court had applied the wrong equal-protection framework and prematurely dismissed the case. *UAW, Region 9 of the UAW v. New Jersey Governor Philip Murphy*, A-0057-24 (N.J. Super. Ct. App. Div. Jan. 26, 2026).

pattern continued, rather than asking whether current conduct reflected present fitness. That was not the inquiry Rule 5B required.

**4. The Mandamus Actions Do Not Support the Board's Characterization of Mr. Mills' Litigation as Misuse of the Legal Process.**

As to the mandamus actions, the Board's conclusion that Mr. Mills engaged in "false allegations, meritless litigation, or serial litigation" is not supported by this record. After reviewing certified transcripts of the trooper's testimony, the Howard County State's Attorney's Office prepared a draft indictment charging that trooper with perjury, obstruction of justice, filing a false police report, and related offenses for presentation to a grand jury. Applicant Copy (Pt. 1) at 1569–79; Tr. 72:6–18, 82:1–21.

Those petitions were properly grounded in Maryland law. *Brack v. Wells*, 184 Md. 86, 40 A.2d 319 (1944), recognized that mandamus may lie where a prosecutor's refusal to proceed reflects gross abuse of discretion. *Sibley v. Doe*, 227 Md. App. 645, 135 A.3d 883 (2016), and *Holloman v. Mosby*, 253 Md. App. 1, 262 A.3d 1142 (2021), recognized a private citizen's right, after exhaustion of other remedies, to seek a grand-jury investigation and to submit evidence for the grand jury's consideration.

Judge Nicklas, after reviewing Mr. Mills' mandamus history, did not treat the proceedings as abusive, inappropriate, or brought in bad faith. To the contrary, he observed that, as these issues were unfolding, "the law was just



being decided,” that “Grand Juries for years have been murky,” and that if the area was murky for those outside the system, it was “just as murky for the people inside the system.” Ex. 38. He further rejected defendants’ contention that Mr. Mills had already been afforded all the rights to which he was entitled in 2017 as “not persuasive,” concluded that the counts were properly pleaded, and denied dismissal and summary judgment as to the mandamus and injunctive-relief claims. *Id.* In that posture, Judge Nicklas treated the mandamus claims not as vexatious or inappropriate, but as serious and properly pleaded claims arising in an evolving area of law.

The Board nevertheless treated Mr. Mills’ acknowledgment on cross-examination that no court had formally found the Trooper committed perjury, and that he could not know the jury’s internal reasoning, as if it established that his allegations were false. Tr. 124:13–21, 125:4–6, 125:20–24, 126:1–2. That acknowledgment established only the absence of a formal judicial finding, not that the allegations were false. The record also showed that, after reviewing certified transcripts, the Howard County State’s Attorney’s Office prepared a draft indictment charging the Trooper with perjury and related offenses for presentation to a grand jury. Applicant Copy (Pt. 1) at 1569–79; Tr. 72:6–18, 82:1–21. On this record, the absence of a formal judicial perjury finding did not establish that Mr. Mills’ allegations were false, much less that

the mandamus actions showed abuse of legal process or present character unfitness.

**C. Under *Zbiegien*, and Consistent with *Nichols* and *Padlock*, the Board’s Educational, Disclosure, and Candor Findings Do Not Support Denial.**

Minnesota law does not treat a law-school disciplinary matter, an earlier application omission, or a disputed explanation as automatically disqualifying. In *Zbiegien*, this Court independently reversed the Board’s denial even though the case involved serious law-school plagiarism and a Board finding that the applicant had attempted to deceive the Board in his application and testimony. The Court held that disclosure sufficient to put the Board on notice to investigate, together with explanation, remorse, and evidence that the conduct would not be repeated, could support admission notwithstanding the Board’s contrary view. *Zbiegien*, 433 N.W.2d at 874, 876–77. That framework governs here.

The Board treated four matters as collectively showing present dishonesty: the California adverse determination, the 2018 law-school omission, the 2022 academic-integrity matter, and its broader skepticism toward Mr. Mills’ candor. But those matters do not bear the weight the Board assigned them. As to California, the Board was still required to assess present fitness on this record, see *Zbiegien*, 433 N.W.2d at 874, and the Board later

confirmed that California answered “No” when asked whether Mr. Mills had failed to disclose information in that process. Finding 113.

As to the 2018 law-school application, Mr. Mills stated that he did not intend to hide any civil matters, explained that he focused on the case most prominent in his mind, described the omission as an oversight he regretted, and testified that he intended to look up the other matters and forgot to do so. Findings 73–74; Tr. 52:6–14. The Board itself found that when the dean later addressed the class, Mr. Mills focused on the criminal matters the dean discussed and would have updated the civil matters as well had the dean focused on them. Finding 75. The omitted civil matters also were not uniformly adverse; they included matters in which Mr. Mills had secured judgments or settlements. Finding 76. And, critically, the omission was not repeated in the admissions process: Mr. Mills voluntarily submitted the 2018 law-school application with his Minnesota application, later explained the omission when asked, continued supplementing the record, and reopened a portal item the Board had marked “Completed” to upload more documentation. Stipulated Findings 58–60; Findings 62, 73–75, 129.

*Nichols* is persuasive for the same reason. There, the Wisconsin Board found third-year academic misconduct, multiple disclosure omissions, and a credibility problem. The Wisconsin Supreme Court accepted that the Board was entitled to disbelieve Nichols’ explanations and to find that he was not

credible. Even so, the court reversed. It held that the incidents, “while troubling,” were sufficiently offset by positive character evidence; observed that “[t]he omissions on his bar application were careless”; and emphasized that “the items omitted do not, themselves, reflect poorly on Mr. Nichols’ character.” 2017 WI 55, ¶¶ 3, 18, 30. That reasoning is highly instructive here. Like Nichols, Mr. Mills presented strong support from legal educators and an attorney-employer fully aware of the relevant history. And as in *Nichols*, the omitted civil matters here do not themselves reflect poorly on character.

If anything, *Nichols* presented the more difficult case. There, the applicant’s record included third-year plagiarism and disclosure omissions on both the law-school and bar applications. Here, by contrast, the academic-integrity matter was resolved as recklessness rather than intentional dishonesty, and there was no comparable failure to disclose civil matters on Mr. Mills’ bar applications. The Minnesota record instead shows that, once the law-school omission was raised, Mr. Mills explained it, supplemented the record, and did not repeat it in the Minnesota process. Under *Zbiegien* and *Nichols*, that is not a record requiring denial.

*Padlock* reinforces the same point. Even where a board disbelieves an applicant’s explanations for incomplete disclosures, that disbelief does not “lead, inexorably, to the conclusion that she lacks the character and fitness to practice law.” 2021 WI 69, ¶ 36. The same is true here: even if the Board

disbelieved Mr. Mills' explanation, that disbelief did not permit it to treat a law-school omission and a single academic matter resolved as recklessness as dispositive proof of present unfitness.

Read as a whole, this record does not show an applicant presently unfit to practice law. It shows a past law-school omission later disclosed in Minnesota, a single academic-integrity matter resolved as recklessness, an out-of-state adverse determination that did not itself establish a disclosure failure, and strong present-day character evidence from those best positioned to assess who Mr. Mills is now. Under *Zbiegien*, and consistent with *Nichols* and *Padlock*, those circumstances warranted scrutiny, but not denial.

**D. The Post-Graduation Record and Professional Character Evidence Strongly Support Admission.**

Even apart from the errors discussed above, the affirmative record strongly supports admission. Mr. Mills passed the February 2025 Minnesota bar examination with a score of 290, has worked as a law clerk under attorney supervision since May 2024, and has received strong endorsements from attorneys and legal educators familiar with the relevant history. Those individuals nevertheless concluded that Mr. Mills possesses the requisite character and fitness to practice law.

Mr. Ammerman's testimony and letter are especially significant. At the hearing, he testified that Mr. Mills is capable, skilled, responsible,

trustworthy, and ready for the practice of law. Tr. 18:20–30:11. In his August 25, 2025 letter, he wrote that over sixteen months of close work Mr. Mills had been “diligent, reliable, and conscientious,” that his approach to litigation reflects “tenacity, guided by respect for legal process,” and that he was “absolutely convinced” Mr. Mills possesses the requisite moral character and fitness to practice law. Ex. 46.

Dean Lyon’s endorsement points in the same direction. Writing after the Board’s adverse determination and in support of the formal hearing, he described Mr. Mills as “engaged with the material, inquisitive, and prepared,” praised his persistence despite “many obstacles,” and concluded that his “intellectual curiosity, perseverance, and resilience will serve Mr. Mills well as an attorney.” He also stated that Mr. Mills understands “the importance of candor and complete honesty in all of his dealings as an attorney.” Ex. 37.

The record also reflects substantial evidence of present stability, responsibility, and service. During and after law school, Mr. Mills engaged in volunteer and public-serving activities, including assisting immigrant families, supporting environmental litigation, speaking with students at Bowie State University about law school and legal careers, producing a documentary concerning the Salvadoran civil war for human-rights education, and helping preserve Holocaust-survivor testimony. His narrative statement also

documented more recent public-health and public-interest legal work under attorney supervision. Findings 122, 124, 125(d); Tr. 91:11–93:17.

No witness contradicted Mr. Ammerman’s assessment, and the Board identified no persuasive reason to discount the letters and testimony of the people who know Mr. Mills in his present professional life and work. On this record, the affirmative evidence of present fitness strongly supports admission.

## **II. ALTERNATIVELY, THE COURT SHOULD ORDER CONDITIONAL ADMISSION UNDER RULE 16.**

If the Court concludes that conditions on admission are warranted notwithstanding the strong evidence of rehabilitation and present fitness, the appropriate alternative is conditional admission under Rule 16, not outright denial. Rule 16 provides a tailored mechanism to protect the public while permitting admission subject to appropriate conditions. On this record, that is the narrower and more proportionate response.

Mr. Mills passed the Minnesota bar examination with a score of 290, successfully performed legal work under attorney supervision, engaged in volunteer service during and after law school, and presented strong professional character evidence from those best positioned to assess his current conduct. If the Court concludes that some monitoring or structure would be beneficial at the outset of practice, Rule 16 directly addresses that concern without excluding him from the profession.

Mr. Mills does not concede that the Board properly denied admission. To the contrary, he submits that the record supports admission now. But if the Court is not prepared to order admission outright, any remaining concern can be addressed through conditions under Rule 16 rather than by excluding him from the profession for three additional years. On this record, conditional admission would better serve Rule 5B's focus on present fitness and rehabilitation than outright denial.

### **CONCLUSION**

Mr. Mills does not dispute that his past warranted careful scrutiny. But the Rules require more than scrutiny of past events in isolation. They require a fair assessment of present character and fitness, including age at the time of the conduct, remoteness, rehabilitation, candor, recent conduct, and positive social contribution. Considered as a whole, that record supports admission.

The principal alcohol-related misconduct occurred approximately fifteen years ago, when Mr. Mills was 19 and 20 years old. He accepted responsibility for that conduct, completed intensive treatment, and has had no further traffic violations or similar issues since 2019. He passed the Minnesota bar examination, performed legal work under attorney supervision, contributed through volunteer service during and after law school, and received strong endorsements from experienced attorneys and legal educators who concluded that he possesses the character and fitness required to practice law.



The remaining issues identified by the Board do not alter that conclusion. Read fairly and as a whole, the record reflects substantial rehabilitation, sustained lawful conduct, disclosure and supplementation during the admissions process, and meaningful professional support from those best positioned to assess Mr. Mills' present character. On this record, denial is not warranted under Rule 5B's focus on present fitness and rehabilitation.

For these reasons, the Court should reverse the Board's denial and order Mr. Mills admitted to the practice of law. In the alternative, if the Court concludes that conditions on admission are warranted, it should order conditional admission under Rule 16 rather than deny admission outright. If the Court determines that further proceedings are necessary before resolving the merits, it should grant review and direct full briefing and argument.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: March 23, 2026

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