BEFORE THE BOARD OF PHARMACY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

Case No. 5730

PASCAL A. BUI,

OAH No. 2016051207

Pharmacy Technician Registration No. TCH 124958

Respondent.

DECISION

The attached Proposed Decision of the Administrative Law Judge is hereby adopted by the Board of Pharmacy as the decision in the above-entitled matter, except that, pursuant to the provisions of Government Code section 11517, subdivision (c)(2)(C), the following technical change is made to page two, paragraph #7, second sentence:

"She inspected the premises of Pharmerica, and reviewed purchase and dispensing records from May 1, 2014 to May 1, 2015."

In addition, a technical change is made to page six, under Order, paragraph #1, in which the license number should read as "TCH 124958."

The technical changes made above do not affect the factual or legal basis of the Proposed Decision, which shall become effective at 5:00 p.m. on August 8, 2016.

IT IS SO ORDERED this 8th day of July, 2016.

BOARD OF PHARMACY
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS
STATE OF CALIFORNIA

By

Amy Gutierrez, Pharm.D.

Board President

BEFORE THE BOARD OF PHARMACY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS STATE OF CALIFORNIA

In the Matter of the Accusation Against:

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Pharmacy Technician Registration No. TCH 124958

Respondent.

Case No. 5730

OAH No. 2016051207

PROPOSED DECISION

Administrative Law Judge Mary-Margaret Anderson, Office of Administrative Hearings, State of California, heard this matter on June 9, 2016, in Oakland, California.

Timothy J. McDonough, Deputy Attorney General, represented Complainant Virginia Herold, Executive Officer, California State Board of Pharmacy (Board).

Patrick S. Valencia, Attorney at Law, represented Respondent Pascal A. Bui, who was present.

The record closed on June 9, 2016.

FACTUAL FINDINGS

- 1. Complainant Virginia Herold filed the Accusation in her official capacity as Executive Officer of the California Board of Pharmacy (Board).
- 2. On July 20, 2012, the Board issued Pharmacy Technician Registration No. TCH 124968 to Respondent Pascal A. Bui. The registration is renewed until January 31, 2018.

Official notice is taken that on May 5, 2016, an Interim Suspension Order was issued against Respondent. The Order suspended Respondent's registration, and states that "Respondent is restrained from directly or indirectly practicing as a pharmacy technician in California and from access to pharmacy settings pending the hearing and decision on the accusation against him."

- 3. In an Accusation signed May 6, 2016, Complainant alleges that Respondent stole promethazine with codeine syrup (PCS), a Schedule V controlled substance, from the pharmacy where he was employed. It is alleged that he is therefore subject to license discipline for committing a dishonest act; violating the laws relating to controlled substances; furnishing dangerous drugs without a prescription; and possessing a controlled substance without a prescription. Respondent filed a Notice of Defense and this hearing followed.
- 4. Respondent admitted the thefts during the investigation and at hearing. He presented evidence of mitigation and rehabilitation.
- 5. The standard of proof applied in making the factual findings is clear and convincing evidence to a reasonable certainty.

Investigation

- 6. This case arose following the Board's receipt of a report of loss on June 9, 2015, from Pharmerica, a pharmacy in Mountain View. The report identified the loss of one bottle of PCS and Respondent as a suspect. Board Inspector Manisha Shafir was assigned to the case.
- 7. Shafir obtained documents and surveillance video that recorded Respondent's activities when he was working. She inspected the premises of Pharmerica, and reviewed purchase and dispensing records from May 1 to May 31, 2014. The audit and investigation confirmed a loss of 74.5 pints of PCS. Shafir issued citations to Pharmerica and the pharmacist-in-charge for violations of the Pharmacy Law, including failing to maintain security for their prescription medications and failing to retain records of disposition of medications.
- 8. PCS is prescribed for the temporary relief of cough and upper respiratory symptoms associated with allergies or a cold. It is normally dosed as one teaspoon every four to six hours, with a maximum dose of 60 mg/day of codeine. Four ounces would therefore last-approximately four to six-days.

PCS is a highly abused controlled substance. The codeine provides a euphoric effect. Shafir opined that the street value is as much as \$500 per pint. It is used as part of a drug "cocktail" which can also include other controlled substances. It is referred to on the street as "purple drank," purple jelly," and "sizzurp."

- 9. Inspector Shafir interviewed Respondent, who admitted stealing PCS. At that time, he estimated taking 32 to 34 pints. Respondent provided two written statements and testified at hearing. His descriptions of the theft and his use of PCS were consistent.
- 10. Respondent began working as a pharmacy technician for Pharmerica full time on August 1, 2012. His duties included filling medications, typing, compounding, and

shipping. He often worked the graveyard shift. In November 2014, Respondent had a very bad cold and a cough. He took some PCS that his father had, and "felt better quite quickly." Respondent never sought or obtained his own prescription for PCS.

During the time he committed the thefts, Respondent was feeling very stressed because of his working conditions at Pharmerica. He was lead technician on the graveyard shift and felt overworked and rushed. Respondent also felt he was not receiving the training he needed to advance and was quite frustrated about that. And he was attending college classes, which added to his stress level.

- 11. Respondent began stealing PCS in January 2015, between one and three bottles per shift. He had a system he employed to accomplish the thefts. After he finished filling the Schedule III to Schedule V medications, he would put the containers away near the PCS. He would then place pint bottles of PCS inside a basket under blister packs. He would then close the cabinets and leave the narcotics room, and put the PCS on a shelf in an aisle not frequently used, behind "regular medications." Respondent would then place the bottles in a brown bag and take them to his car. Sometimes, he would take an empty bag to his car "to keep an image that the brown bag is my lunch."
- 12. Respondent mixed about two ounces of PCS at a time with Coca-Cola. He started slowly, but accelerated his use, taking it before bedtime, after work and before and after school; about three to four times each day. Respondent acknowledged that he became addicted to PCS.

Towards the end of May 2015, Respondent realized that "the path I was taking taking [sic] medications out of the pharmacy and consuming it did not sit well with me. Relying on this substance to ease stress made me think of all the people, including my relative, that would drink alcohol to deal with stress and I was no better. I became very dependent on [PCS] to solve any problem with stress I had." Respondent had been "stocking up" at that point, feeling that he was going to leave his position at Pharmerica. He therefore had numerous bottles at home, and he decided to get rid of them. Respondent poured all of the contents of the bottles down the sink.

13. In early June, Respondent missed two days of work and did not call in. He had been in two car accidents, and the second he saw as a sign not to go to work. He called and talked with pharmacist Mandy Yu, who had been his supervisor on the graveyard shift, about returning to work. She told him that others in management were looking into a serious loss of medications from the narcotics room. He later realized that the loss she spoke of might be his thefts of PCS. Respondent's last day of work was May 31, 2015. He was terminated.

Respondent's additional evidence

14. After he left Pharmerica, Respondent took two months off of work and attended summer school. He found this to be "stress relieving." He then applied to a Target

store, where he was hired as a pharmacy technician. The store was taken over by CVS, and he is still employed there, but since his registration was suspended, he works as a pharmacy clerk, not a technician. Respondent also was hired as a tutor by Mission College. Both are part time positions. He is also attending college and in September 2015 began to take 20 units per semester. He has not been criminally prosecuted and has not sought to pay or paid any restitution to Pharmerica for the losses he was responsible for.

- 15. Respondent is addressing his abuse of PCS. He has attended a narcotics anonymous group weekly since January 2016. He does not yet have a sponsor, but is looking for one. In early May 2016, he began seeing a therapist once each week. When he feels the urge to take narcotics, he talks to his therapist or to the NA group. His therapist in particular has taught Respondent several ways to deal with stress. Respondent feels that he is recovering from addiction, but that he just began and has "a long way to go."
- 16. Respondent expressed remorse for his actions; he is sorry. He had the trust of the pharmacists he worked with and now feels he betrayed them. Respondent "knew from the start it was a bad thing but couldn't really stop." He testified that his family does not know about his situation as he has not been able to "build up the courage to tell them that I am a failure." This statement was somewhat confusing, because Respondent also said that the situation caused stress in his family.
- 17. As first stated above, Mandy Yu is a pharmacist who was Respondent's immediate supervisor at Pharmerica. Respondent asked Yu to write him a letter, and he submitted it in a sealed envelope to Inspector Shafir without reading it. Yu compliments Respondent on his work ethic, helpfulness, and good attitude. She closes by writing that he "is a team player and would make a great asset to any organization." The letter is undated. Yu reveals no knowledge of Respondent's thefts or addiction problem.
- 18. Respondent also asked Anhthu Tran, Pharm D., Pharmacy Manager at the CVS pharmacy where he remains employed, for a letter of reference. She wrote two. The first is undated, and was given to Shafir in a sealed envelope. Tran wrote that Respondent had worked with her for about four months, and was dedicated, amazingly driven, and "an outstanding employee who on a daily basis goes above and beyond his duties as a pharmacy technician. " She also opined that "he has the qualities of a role model."

Respondent submitted the second letter from Tran at hearing. It is dated June 8, 2016. The letter is also very complimentary of Respondent's work ethic, and describes him again as an "outstanding employee who on a daily basis goes above and beyond his duties as a pharmacy technician."

19. Respondent testified that when he applied for the CVS job, he said that he had been let go at Pharmerica for attendance problems. He said that he told Tran that his license was suspended until further notice and that there was an investigation at Pharmerica. He did not tell her about the ISO hearing; he "didn't go into great detail about that." Respondent asserts that he has worked only as a clerk since the Interim Suspension Order was issued. He

did not address the portion of the Order that prohibits him "from access to pharmacy settings pending the hearing and decision on the accusation against him."

Costs

- 20. Complainant certified that the Board has incurred costs of investigation totaling \$14,126.75. The total is based on the cost of an inspector for 116.75 hours at \$121 per hour. The inspector declared she spent 60.5 hours conducting an investigation, 5.75 hours in travel time, 47.50 hours or report preparation, and 3 hours preparing for hearing.
- 21. Deputy Attorney General Timothy J. McDonough's declaration states that the Department of Justice has billed the Board \$1,615 for work performed in the investigation and enforcement of this matter.
- 22. In the absence of contrary evidence, the total amount of is \$15,741.75, which included an investigation of the pharmacy and other pharmacy staff as well as Respondent, is found to be reasonable.

LEGAL CONCLUSIONS

- 1. Cause for license discipline for unprofessional conduct pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4301, subdivision (f), dishonest acts, exists by reason of the matters set forth in Findings 6 through 13. Respondent stole PCS from his employer.
- 2. Cause for license discipline for unprofessional conduct pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4301, subdivision (j), violations of laws relating to controlled substances, exists by reason of the matters set forth in Findings 6 through 13. Respondent violated laws including Health and Safety Code section 11350, subdivision (a), possession of a controlled substance, by stealing PCS.
- 3. Cause for license discipline for unprofessional conduct pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4059, furnishing a controlled substance without a prescription, was established by reason of the matters set forth in Findings 6 through 13. Respondent furnished the PCS to himself.
- 4. Cause for license discipline for unprofessional conduct pursuant to Business and Professions Code section 4060, possession of a controlled substance without a prescription, was established by reason of the matters set forth in Findings 6 through 13. Respondent possessed PCS without a prescription.
 - 5. Business and Professions Code section 125.3 provides:
 - ... the board may request an administrative law judge to direct a licentiate found to have committed a violation or violations of

the licensing act to pay a sum not to exceed the reasonable costs of the investigation and enforcement of the case.

By reason of the matters set forth in Finding 23, the reasonable costs in this matter were established to be \$15,741.75.

Zuckerman v. Board of Chiropractic Examiners (2002) 29 Cal.4th 32 sets forth discretionary factors to be considered in determining the amount of costs a Respondent may be ordered to pay. The factors include whether a colorable challenge to the proposed discipline has been raised, a licensee's subjective good faith belief in the merits of his position, financial ability to pay, and whether the scope of the investigation was appropriate to the alleged level of misconduct.

The investigation included the pharmacy and other pharmacy staff in addition to Respondent. It is therefore appropriate to reduce the investigative cost award. The total amount ordered will be \$11,115.

Analysis

6. Before the Board is a recently licensed pharmacy technician who stole narcotics from his pharmacy employer and suffers from an addiction to narcotics. He admitted the theft early in the investigation, and has taken steps to address the addiction. It is very early in the recovery process however, and Respondent's honesty continues to be questionable. He has shown a lack of candor with his current employer and continued to work at a pharmacy despite the clear direction in the Interim Suspension Order. Respondent seems sincere, but it is too early to conclude that he is rehabilitated so that he is safe to practice as a pharmacy technician. The public interest requires his certificate be revoked.

ORDER

Pascal A. Bui, is revoked.

2. Respondent Pascal A. Bui is ordered to pay \$11,115 to the Board of Pharmacy for the costs of investigation and enforcement.

DATED: June 23, 2016

Mary Mar gaut Andum

MARY-MARGARET ANDERSON

Administrative Law Judge

Office of Administrative Hearings

1 2	KAMALA D. HARRIS Attorney General of California DIANN SOKOLOFF		
3	Supervising Deputy Attorney General TIMOTHY J. McDONOUGH		
4	Deputy Attorney General State Bar No. 235850	·	
5	1515 Clay Street, 20th Floor P.O. Box 70550		
	Oakland, CA 94612-0550		
6	Telephone: (510) 622-2134 Facsimile: (510) 622-2270		
7	E-mail: Tim.McDonough@doj.ca.gov Attorneys for Complainant		
8	BEFORE THE		
9	BOARD OF PHARMACY DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS		
10	STATE OF C	CALIFORNIA	
11	In the Matter of the Accusation Against:	Case No. 5730	
12	PASCAL A. BUI		
13	947 Burman Drive San Jose, CA 95111	ACCUSATION	
14 15	Pharmacy Technician Registration No. TCH 124958		
16	Respondent.		
17			
18	Complainant alleges:		
19	<u>PARTIES</u>		
20	1. Virginia Herold (Complainant) brings this Accusation solely in her official capacity		
21	as the Executive Officer of the Board of Pharmacy, Department of Consumer Affairs.		
22	2. On or about July 20, 2012, the Board of Pharmacy issued Pharmacy Technician		
23	Registration No. TCH 124958 to Pascal A, Bui (Respondent). The Pharmacy Technician		
24	Registration was in full force and effect at all times relevant to the charges brought in this		
25	Accusation and will expire on January 31, 2018, unless renewed.		
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28	<i>III</i>		
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ļ		ACCUSATION	

JURISDICTION

- 3. This Accusation is brought before the Board of Pharmacy (Board), Department of Consumer Affairs, under the authority of the following laws. All section references are to the Business and Professions Code unless otherwise indicated.
- 4. Section 4011 of the Code provides that the Board shall administer and enforce both the Pharmacy Law [Bus. & Prof. Code, § 4000 et seq.] and the Uniform Controlled Substances Act [Health & Safety Code, § 11000 et seq.].
 - 5. Section 4300 of the Code states, in relevant part:
 - "(a) Every license issued may be suspended or revoked.
- "(b) The board shall discipline the holder of any license issued by the board, whose default has been entered or whose case has been heard by the board and found guilty, by any of the following methods:
 - "(1) Suspending judgment.
 - "(2) Placing him or her upon probation.
 - "(3) Suspending his or her right to practice for a period not exceeding one year.
 - "(4) Revoking his or her license.
- "(5) Taking any other action in relation to disciplining him or her as the board in its discretion may deem proper.
- "(e) The proceedings under this article shall be conducted in accordance with Chapter 5 (commencing with Section 11500) of Part 1 of Division 3 of the Government Code, and the board shall have all the powers granted therein. The action shall be final, except that the propriety of the action is subject to review by the superior court pursuant to Section 1094.5 of the Code of Civil Procedure."
 - 6. Section 4300.1 of the Code states:

"The expiration, cancellation, forfeiture, or suspension of a board-issued license by operation of law or by order or decision of the board or a court of law, the placement of a license on a retired status, or the voluntary surrender of a license by a licensee shall not deprive the board

of jurisdiction to commence or proceed with any investigation of, or action or disciplinary proceeding against, the licensee or to render a decision suspending or revoking the license."

STATUTES

7. Section 4301 of the Code states, in relevant part:

"The board shall take action against any holder of a license who is guilty of unprofessional conduct or whose license has been procured by fraud or misrepresentation or issued by mistake.

Unprofessional conduct shall include, but is not limited to, any of the following:

"(f) The commission of any act involving moral turpitude, dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or corruption, whether the act is committed in the course of relations as a licensee or otherwise, and whether the act is a felony or misdemeanor or not.

"(j) The violation of any of the statutes of this state, or any other state, or of the United States regulating controlled substances and dangerous drugs."

- 8. Section 4059 of the Code states, in relevant part, that a "person may not furnish any dangerous drug except upon the prescription of a physician, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist, veterinarian, or naturopathic doctor pursuant to Section 3640.7. A person may not furnish any dangerous device, except upon the prescription of a physician, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist, veterinarian, or naturopathic doctor pursuant to Section 3640.7."
 - 9. Section 4060 of the Code states:

"No person shall possess any controlled substance, except that furnished to a person upon the prescription of a physician, dentist, podiatrist, optometrist, veterinarian, or naturopathic doctor pursuant to Section 3640.7, or furnished pursuant to a drug order issued by a certified nurse-midwife pursuant to Section 2746.51, a nurse practitioner pursuant to Section 2836.1, or a physician assistant pursuant to Section 3502.1, or naturopathic doctor pursuant to Section 3640.5, or a pharmacist pursuant to either subparagraph (D) of paragraph (4) of, or clause (iv) of subparagraph (A) of paragraph (5) of, subdivision (a) of Section 4052. This section shall not apply to the possession of any controlled substance by a manufacturer, wholesaler, pharmacy,

pharmacist, physician, podiatrist, dentist, optometrist, veterinarian, naturopathic doctor, certified nurse-midwife, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant, when in stock in containers correctly labeled with the name and address of the supplier or producer.

"This section does not authorize a certified nurse-midwife, a nurse practitioner, a physician assistant, or a naturopathic doctor, to order his or her own stock of dangerous drugs and devices."

10. California Code of Regulations, title 16, section 1770, states:

"For the purpose of denial, suspension, or revocation of a personal or facility license pursuant to Division 1.5 (commencing with Section 475) of the Business and Professions Code, a crime or act shall be considered substantially related to the qualifications, functions or duties of a licensee or registrant if to a substantial degree it evidences present or potential unfitness of a licensee or registrant to perform the functions authorized by his license or registration in a manner consistent with the public health, safety, or welfare."

11: Health and Safety Code section 11350, subdivision (a), states:

"Except as otherwise provided in this division, every person who possesses (1) any controlled substance specified in subdivision (b) or (c), or paragraph (1) of subdivision (f) of Section 11054, specified in paragraph (14), (15), or (20) of subdivision (d) of Section 11054, or specified in subdivision (b) or (c) of Section 11055, or specified in subdivision (h) of Section 11056, or (2) any controlled substance classified in Schedule III, IV, or V which is a narcotic drug, unless upon the written prescription of a physician, dentist, podiatrist, or veterinarian licensed to practice in this state, shall be punished by imprisonment pursuant to subdivision (h) of Section 1170 of the Penal Code."

12. Section 4022 of the Code states:

"Dangerous drug' or 'dangerous device' means any drug or device unsafe for self-use in humans or animals, and includes the following:

"(a) Any drug that bears the legend: 'Caution: federal law prohibits dispensing without prescription,' 'Rx only,' or words of similar import.

ACCUSATION

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Pharmerica, including surveillance video which captured the activities of Respondent when he was working at the pharmacy on various dates.

- 18. As part of her investigation, the Board Inspector interviewed Respondent on September 29, 2015. Respondent's attorney was present. During the interview, Respondent admitted to the Board Inspector that from the middle of January of 2015 until the end of May of 2015, he stole on average 1 to 3 bottles of PCS a shift. Respondent admitted that he stole about 32 to 34 pints of PCS from Pharmerica and that he started "stocking up" because he was thinking of leaving Pharmerica because of the stress.
- 19. During the interview by the Board Inspector, Respondent explained his process by which he took the PCS out of the Pharmerica. He explained that when he was working in the narcotics room of the pharmacy, he would put a bottle of the PCS under the bubble cards in a basket. When he left the room, he would take the basket with the PCS bottle and put it in an unfrequented drug aisle of Pharmerica. Respondent further explained that he would return to the aisle and place the bottles into a brown bag and take them out of the pharmacy. He also indicated that sometimes he would just take an empty bag out with him so in case he was stopped by anyone, it would look like a normal routine for him.
- 20. Respondent told the Board Inspector that he used the PCS when he went to bed and before or after his shifts. He further explained that he would mix about 2 ounces of the PCS with a coke about 3-4 times a day. Respondent told the Board Inspector that he did not have a prescription for PCS. Respondent told the Board Inspector that he was not currently taking PCS because he decided to stop after getting into two car accidents.
- 21. On October 14, 2015, the Board received a six-page statement from Respondent as requested by the Board Inspector. The statement was signed under the penalty of perjury and documented what was said during the interview on September 29, 2015.
- 22. Following an inspection at Pharmerica, the Board Inspector received and reviewed purchase records and dispensing records from Pharmerica from May 1, 2014 to May 31, 2015. The Board's audit and investigation confirmed a loss of 74.5 pints of PCS from Pharmerica.

1. 2	FIRST CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE (Committed Act Involving Dishonesty, Fraud, or Deceit) (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 4301, subd. (f))	
3	23. Respondent has subjected his Pharmacy Technician Registration to disciplinary	
4	action under Code section 4301, subdivision (f), in that he stole PCS from his employer,	
5	Pharmerica. The circumstances are explained in paragraphs 16 through 22, above.	
6	SECOND CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE (Violation of Laws Relating to Controlled Substance) (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 4301, subd. (j))	
8	24. Respondent has subjected his Pharmacy Technician Registration to disciplinary	
9	action under Code section 4031, subdivision (j), in that he violated state laws relating to	
10	controlled substances, including Health and Safety Code, section 11350, subdivision (a)	
11	(possessing controlled substances), when he stole PCS from his employer. The circumstances are	
12	more fully explained in paragraphs 16 through 22, above.	
13 14	THIRD CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE (Furnishing Dangerous Drugs without a Prescription) (Bus.& Prof. Code, § 4059)	
15	25. Respondent has subjected his Pharmacy Technician Registration to disciplinary	
16	action under Code section 4059, in that he furnished and used PCS, a controlled substance,	
17	without a prescription on numerous occasions from January 2015 to May 2015. The	
18	circumstances are more fully explained in paragraphs 16 through 22, above.	
19 20	FOURTH CAUSE FOR DISCIPLINE (Possession of Controlled Substance without a Prescription) (Bus. & Prof. Code, § 4060)	
21	26. Respondent has subjected his Pharmacy Technician Registration to disciplinary	
22	action under Code section 4060, in that he illegally possessed PCS, a controlled substance,	
23	without a prescription, on numerous occasions from January 2015 to May 2015. The	
24	circumstances are more fully explained in paragraphs 16 through 22, above.	
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1 2 3 4 issued to Pascal A. Bui; 5 6 7 125.3; 8 3, 9 10 11 5/6/16 DATED: 12 13 14 15 16 SF2016900031 17 90645310.docx 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26

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PRAYER

WHEREFORE, Complainant requests that a hearing be held on the matters alleged in this Accusation, and that following the hearing, the Board of Pharmacy issue a decision:

- Revoking or suspending Pharmacy Technician Registration Number TCH 124958,
- Ordering Pascal A. Bui to pay the Board of Pharmacy the reasonable costs of the investigation and enforcement of this case, pursuant to Business and Professions Code section
 - Taking such other and further action as deemed necessary and proper.

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VIRGINIA HEROLD Executive Officer Board of Pharmacy

Department of Consumer Affairs

State of California

Complainant