

Office of the State Inspector General

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Investigation of the Charleston County School District Board of Trustees for Potential Misconduct, Disclosure of Confidential Information and Adverse Fiscal Impacts

Updated October 2026

I. Introduction

The South Carolina Office of the State Inspector General (SCOIG) was established by the South Carolina General Assembly in 2012 (Act No. 105) for the purpose of investigating and addressing allegations of fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement and misconduct in agencies, specifically the executive branch of state government.

The SCOIG's authorities are found in [S.C. Code § 1-6-10 et seq.](#) In 2022, the South Carolina General Assembly passed S. 202 (Act No. 223) that expanded the SCOIG's authority to investigate public schools and school districts, public charter schools and authorizers, and voluntary associations that establish and enforce bylaws or rules for interscholastic sports competition for public secondary schools.

By letter dated [1/15/2026](#), South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster requested the SCOIG to initiate an investigation, review, and analysis of the Charleston County School District (District) Board of Trustees (Board) regarding various allegations and concerns of potential mismanagement, misconduct, violations of state or federal law, or wrongdoing. Specifically, the SCOIG was requested to investigate the District's Board and determine if one or more Board members *"willfully commit[ed] or engage[d] in an act of malfeasance, misfeasance, chronic unexcused absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct in office, or persistent neglect of duty in office"* pursuant to [S.C. Code § 59-19-60](#).

This investigation focused on the broader issues confronting the District in the areas of Board misconduct, disclosure of confidential information, interference with District operations and adverse fiscal impacts caused by one or more Board members. The report is not intended to address every individual complaint or issue conveyed to the SCOIG but provides a road map for the Board members and District leadership to improve in its delivery of quality education to its students in a unified effort.

Notwithstanding, this investigation determined sufficient probable cause existed to recommend that Governor McMaster consider the utilization of S.C. Code § 59-19-60 for the removal of a Board member.

The SCOIG extends its appreciation to District superintendent Anita Huggins, Board chair Pamela McKinney, District staff, and Board members for their cooperation and intentionality of seeking solutions to the issues identified by the SCOIG. The SCOIG also extends its appreciation to current and former teachers and administrators, and to the parents and constituents in the District for the candor, courage and valuable input provided to the SCOIG during this investigation.

Report Update:

The following update includes additional information following the removal hearing dated 9/28/2026. Redactions in the original public report have been removed, except for personally identifiable information, subsequent to the receipt of a limited waiver of attorney client privilege from the District.

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II. Background

A. Predicate

By letter dated [1/15/2026](#), South Carolina Governor Henry McMaster requested the South Carolina Office of the State Inspector General (SCOIG) to initiate an investigation, review, and analysis of the Charleston County School District (District) regarding various allegations and concerns of potential mismanagement, misconduct, violations of state or federal law, or wrongdoing. Specifically, the SCOIG was requested to investigate the District's Board of Trustees (Board) and determine if one or more Board members "*willfully commit[ed] or engage[d] in an act of malfeasance, misfeasance, chronic unexcused absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct in office, or persistent neglect of duty in office*" pursuant to [S.C. Code § 59-19-60](#).¹

B. Scope and Objectives

The scope of the investigation examined the effectiveness and efficiency of the Board with particular focus on intra-Board conduct and relations, District operations, potential Board misconduct and/or interference with District operations particularly in the expenditure of funds and procurement not otherwise budgeted or approved. The investigation focused on the District's Board for leadership related matters that negatively affected the District's ability to conduct, manage, and oversee its affairs in an appropriate and effective manner. The period of review for the Board covered the period of 11/7/2022 through the public release of this report.

C. Methodology

The SCOIG reviewed relevant documentation comprised of Board policies and procedures, District policies and procedures, finance and procurement records, vendor contracts, reports, emails and text messages provided in discovery by the District and other non-District entities.

The SCOIG interviewed Board members (under oath), knowledgeable District staff, members of the public, subject matter experts and people who initiated confidential contact with the SCOIG. In addition, the SCOIG reviewed applicable state and federal laws, regulations and policies.

Reviews and investigations by the SCOIG are conducted in accordance with professional standards set forth by the Association of Inspectors General's *Principles and Standards for Offices of Inspector General*, often referred to as the "Green Book." This investigation used the preponderance of evidence standard.

D. Charleston County School District

The District is the second largest school district in the state and located in Charleston, South Carolina. The District provided a broad range of general and specialized educational services and programs to support academic, career and personal development. The District facilitates instruction for over 51,000 students in 53 Child Development/Head Start facilities, pre-kindergarten through grade twelve in 46 elementary schools, 13 middle schools, 17 high schools and nine charter schools. The District received funding through state appropriations, federal government programs and its local tax base. During the 2025-26 school year, the Day-45 enrollment for the District was 50,538 students, with 23,561 identified as pupils in poverty.

¹ Pursuant to S.C. Code § 1-6-35(A)(1)(B), the Governor may request the SCOIG to investigate a public school district in writing with an articulable basis of any alleged wrongdoing.

Anita Huggins began her tenure as acting superintendent on 9/25/2023 and became District superintendent on 2/6/2024. For the 2025–26 school year, superintendent Huggins supervised 6,804 staff, including 3,826 non-certified teachers, 435 certified teachers and 2,543 administrative and support staff.

III. Board of Trustees

The District was governed by a Board comprised of nine (9) members, each representing a single-member district within Charleston County as defined by South Carolina state law and District policy. Members serve four-year staggered terms to ensure continuity so that not all seats are up for election at one time. During this investigation, Pamela McKinney was Board chair for the 2025-2026 school year, and the Board was constituted as follows:

Board of Trustees	District	Current Term
Keith Grybowski	1	11/2022 - 11/2026
Carolina Jewett	2	11/2024 - 11/2028
Pamela McKinney (Board Chair)	3	11/2022 - 11/2026
Kevin Hollinshead	4	11/2024 - 11/2028*
Craig Logan	4	6/2026 - 11/2028**
Charlotte Bailey (Vice-Chair)	5	11/2022 - 11/2026
Michele Leber	6	11/2024 - 11/2028
Leah Whatley	7	11/2022 - 11/2026
Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson	8	11/2022 - 11/2028
Dr. Carol Tempel	9	11/2022 - 11/2026

*Kevin Hollinshead resigned on 3/17/2026.

**Craig Logan sworn in on 6/22/2026 following a special election to fill the District 4 vacancy.

The Board operated in accordance with the [S.C. Code - Title 59, Chapter 19 - School Trustees](#) as referenced in the Board policy [BBA Board Powers and Duties](#). The Board had fiscal autonomy to approve and administer the District's budget. The [Board approved](#) an \$868,503,047 budget for the [2025-2026](#) school year.

A. Board Oversight and Roles

A school board's primary duty is to supervise the public school district in compliance with national and state regulations. The Board functioned as a governance committee and established the District's overarching vision and objectives.²

Board members were aligned as to the role of the Board with most of the members in agreement that the most important role of the Board is to hire the superintendent, vote on a balanced budget, and update or create policy as needed. The Board held regularly scheduled meetings to discuss agenda items ranging from evaluation of the superintendent, approval of budgets, acknowledging special recognitions, as well as inviting comments from the public.

² See policy [BA - Board Purpose](#).

B. Board Member Procurement (P-card) Purchases and Travel Expenses

A review of the District's procurement (P-card) purchases for the Board and Board travel expenses did not identify any material issues. The District maintains established procurement and travel policies, and the review found no material deviations from those policies.

C. Board – Superintendent Relationship

The SCOIG reviewed numerous email correspondence forwarded to Board members from the superintendent. This email correspondence ranged from policy clarification, strategic planning, event recognition and constituent concerns, among others.

The SCOIG observed that, while most Board members' email communications with the superintendent were professional in nature, one or more Board members' responses on several occasions reflected a more adversarial tone. Among the examples included:

- "Return to Sender,"
- Direct communication with District staff on constituent concerns, and
- Assertions that the superintendent chastised a Board member and that the superintendent accused a Board member of intimidating or harassing District staff.

Superintendent Huggins is the Board secretary. One of the duties of this position is to notify Board members when Board policies may have been violated, such as an email sent by a Board member as "Reply All" that violates the improper quorum provision within the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) or when a Board member contacts the District's outside counsel in an individual capacity. Board policy BB dictates that Board members "...*acting as individuals have no authority over personnel or school affairs, nor may they bind the district in any way.*" In these instances, superintendent Huggins is acting in the capacity as Board secretary, not as the employee of the Board.

D. Board Decorum and Dysfunction

The SCOIG observed significant communication challenges and a lack of trust among Board members. These communication challenges included multiple Board members' failure to follow policy or communication protocols that caused the Board's inconsistent application of policies and procedures established for the District and Board member behavior and decorum.

The Board failed to follow Board policy [BC - Board Meeting Protocol](#)," which, *inter alia*, provided the following rules of decorum shall be observed:

"Refrain from...

- *Irrelevant, repetitive, overly long comments or comments of a personally attacking nature*
- *Conduct that disrupts or impedes the orderly conduct of the meeting"*

Board member interviews revealed a significant conviction that Board behavior negatively impacted Board governance and operations. Board members showed an apparent lack of respect towards each other that fostered a mutual disregard in making logical board decisions that impact constituents represented by Board members. Some of the Board members accused each other of voting based on political party ties, being bullied, and being criticized for voting against individuals of their own race.

The SCOIG noted that the terms "The Left" and "The Right" were frequently used. It was implied that the Board members made decisions based more on their own political allegiance than on what was best for the students and constituents they represented.

The Board failed to follow Board policy [BCA - Board Member Code of Ethics](#), which, *inter alia*, provided the following rules of decorum shall be observed:

"A board member shall honor the high responsibility that his/her membership demands by doing the following..."

- *Placing children's interest above partisan or other political interests."*

E. Freedom of Information Act Violations – Improper Quorums

The SCOIG identified multiple instances in which one or more Board members used the "Reply All" function to communicate with the full Board regarding District business. These communications occurred despite previous warnings that such exchanges could implicate FOIA by involving a quorum of board members outside a properly noticed public meeting. Under S.C. Code § 30-4-20(d), a "meeting" includes the convening of a quorum by means of electronic equipment to discuss or act upon matters within the Board's jurisdiction. Additionally, S.C. Code § 30-4-20(c) states that communication relating to official public business may constitute public records subject to disclosure under FOIA.

The Board had previously been placed on notice regarding its obligations under FOIA. In [August 2022](#), South Carolina Attorney General Alan Wilson issued a formal warning to the District's Board over FOIA compliance. The District acknowledged violating FOIA and took corrective action. More recently, the Board was again challenged in litigation alleging FOIA violations involving private deliberations and actions taken without proper public notice. Collectively, these events demonstrate that the Board had prior notice of its obligations under FOIA and the importance of avoiding communication that could reasonably be perceived as deliberations outside a properly noticed public meeting.

F. Unnecessary Attorney/Client Consultation Costs

The SCOIG received allegations that one or more Board members improperly caused excessive legal fees to the District. Consistent with South Carolina law, Board policy [BB](#) clearly states:

"All powers of the board lie in its action as a body. Board members acting as individuals have no authority over personnel or school affairs, nor may they bind the district in any way."

The SCOIG analyzed billing records regarding the District's outside legal counsel(s). This analysis – for the period of October 2023 through April 2026 – determined that the District was billed \$74,384.20 related to legal services initiated by a single Board member who acted unilaterally without the consent of the Board body in violation of Board policy BB.

Despite repeated notifications to all Board members to follow Board policy BB the individual Board member continued to contact outside counsel in an individual capacity and caused the District to expend funds for unauthorized legal services. Most recently, the Board chair instructed outside counsel to accept inquiries only from the Board chair or the superintendent to curtail unauthorized expenditures of District funds.

Board policy [BCA](#) states: *"In order to build and maintain productive and effective relationships among themselves and with the superintendent and staff, board members shall maintain a system of communication and interaction that builds upon mutual respect and trust by, among other things: recognizing that authority rests only with the board in official meetings and that the **individual board member has no legal status to bind the board outside such meetings.**"* [SCOIG emphasis]

Board policy [BDG](#) refers to "general counsel" and "outside counsel" as distinct roles. The superintendent appears to be the only person "authorized to communicate" with both. Nonetheless, there appears to be no express authority for any individual Board member to direct "general counsel" or "outside counsel" – absent a function of the "Board" via majority consent. Board policy [BIE](#) provides personal liability protection when acting within the authority of the Board as a body.

Similarly, the District's legal counsel – when communicating with one or more Board members – regularly included a closing remark welcoming further discussion, e.g., *"please do not hesitate to contact me if there are any questions."*

In the absence of clearly defined contractual terms setting clear boundaries with outside counsel and delineation of responsibilities for in-house counsel and outside counsel, the District incurred unnecessary legal expenses. The services performed by outside and in-house counsel duplicated the scope of work intended for in-house counsel. The District paid more than \$6 million to outside counsel for advice to Board members, school personnel, to draft agendas and attend Board meetings from 2022 to June 2026. Nonetheless, the SCOIG recommends certain changes to Board policies to limit any Board member from being able to incur legal expenses when not acting as the Board chair and/or at the consent of the Board as a body.

IV. Unauthorized Disclosure of Confidential Information

A. Disclosure of Executive Session Material by a Board Member

The SCOIG received allegations that one or more Board members improperly shared confidential Board information in violation of Board policy [BCA](#)³ and/or [BE](#)⁴ that included executive session information. Specifically, the allegation was that one or more Board members forwarded otherwise confidential District emails to external email addresses.

Pursuant to S.C. Code § 1-6-50(A) and § 1-6-20(E), the District provided the SCOIG with substantial documentation consisting of email records of District Board members. The SCOIG reviewed the records for evidence that Board members improperly forwarded otherwise confidential and/or privileged materials to external (personal) email addresses. The SCOIG's analysis identified instances in which confidential and/or privileged information was forwarded to external addresses.

Substantial probable cause existed that the alleged disclosure of confidential executive session information was accurate and factored into a federal grand jury indictment of a District Board member for bribery that disclosed confidential Board information to a District vendor. See, Indictment, p. 9, [United States v. Kevin Dion Hollinshead](#), No. 2:26-cr-00174-CRI (D.S.C. March 3, 2026) on the following page.

³ Board policy [BCA](#) stated in part: *"board members shall maintain the confidentiality appropriate to sensitive issues and information, especially those matters discussed in executive session."*

⁴ Board policy [BE](#) stated in part: *"Board members and other persons attending are duty-bound not to disclose matters discussed in executive session."*

34. On or about July 11, 2025, Source 1 and **KEVIN DION HOLLINSHEAD** spoke with Source 1 by telephone about Construction Company's protest. During the call, **KEVIN DION HOLLINSHEAD** revealed that although he was not permitted to participate in a CCSD Board of Trustees executive session about the bid protest, a fellow Board of Trustees member advised **KEVIN DION HOLLINSHEAD** that CCSD intended to offer \$15,000 to settle the dispute.

As indicated in paragraph #34 of the indictment, the grand jurors determined that a fellow Board member participated in the disclosure of confidential executive session information. Regardless, the grand jury found that probable cause existed that substantiated the allegation of disclosure of confidential executive session information by a Board member.

B. Unauthorized Disclosure of Confidential Information to News Media Outlets and District Vendor

An SCOIG review of the District Board members' emails revealed only two instances occurred whereby Board members forwarded items to their personal email addresses. By stark contrast, most of the identifiable forwarded emails were to news media outlets and an established District vendor's email address for Next Level Educational Services, LLC (Next Level) by a single Board member.

The SCOIG confirmed the vendor application for Next Level and determined through the South Carolina Enterprise Information System (SCEIS) that Next Level was a state vendor with SCEIS vendor # 7000243768, owned and operated by the current District 8 Board member, Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson. (See below)

Charleston County SCHOOL DISTRICT	
PROCUREMENT SERVICES VENDOR'S APPLICATION (Subject to any state and local laws) PROVIDE COMPLETED COPY OF W-9 PROVIDE ALL REQUIRED DOCUMENTS	
To Be Completed by District VENDOR NO. _____ ACCEPTANCE DATE: _____	
NAME OF COMPANY: <u>Next Level Educational Services, LLC</u> TELEPHONE NUMBER: <u>703.731.2260</u> FAX NUMBER: <u>866.844.4356</u> E-Mail address: <u>roberson757@gmail.com</u> WEBSITE: <u>www.next-level-education.com</u>	
DOING BUSINESS AS: <u>Next Level Educational Services</u>	
ADDRESS TO WHICH BIDS, QUOTES AND PURCHASE ORDERS ARE TO BE MAILED: <u>Royal Harbor Road, Hollywood, SC 29449</u>	
E-Mail address for Purchase Orders: <u>roberson757@gmail.com</u>	
REMITTANCE ADDRESS: (IF DIFFERENT FROM ABOVE) _____ HOW LONG IN PRESENT BUSINESS: <u>12 years</u>	
TYPE OF ORGANIZATION: INDIVIDUAL _____ CORPORATION ☒ NON-PROFIT _____ (PROVIDE APPROPRIATE DOCUMENTATION) IF CORPORATION INDICATE WHICH STATE: <u>VA/SC</u>	
NAME OF OFFICER(S), OWNER(S) OR PARTNER(S) AND CONTACT(S) IN YOUR ORGANIZATION: (A) PRESIDENT _____ PRODUCTS ARE SOLD: <u>Educational Support Services</u> (B) VICE PRESIDENT _____ DELIVERED FOB _____ (IF SO FOB POINT) (C) SECRETARY _____ INVOICE TERMS (min. net 30): <u>X</u> (D) TREASURER _____ NET WORTH: _____ (E) OWNER/PARTNER <u>X Darlene Roberson</u> AVERAGE NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: <u>2</u>	
PERSON AUTHORIZED TO SIGN BIDS, OFFERS, QUOTES AND CONTRACTS: NAME: <u>Darlene Roberson</u> OFFICIAL CAPACITY: <u>CEO</u> TEL. NO. <u>703.731.2260</u>	
LIST TYPE OF EQUIPMENT, SUPPLIES, MATERIAL, AND/OR SERVICES ON WHICH YOU DESIRE TO RECEIVE BID SOLICITATIONS: <u>Educational Support Services, Counseling dept., organizational management, training, professional development</u>	
TYPE OF BUSINESS: CATEGORY (CHECK ONE) MANUFACTURER _____ REGULAR DEALER _____ SERVICE ESTABLISHMENT _____ SURPLUS DEALER _____ CONSTRUCTION CONCERN _____ GOVERNMENTAL _____ WHOLESALE _____ EDUCATIONAL ☒ OTHERS _____	
BUSINESS ENTERPRISE SMALL BUSINESS ☒ MINORITY ☒ WOMAN OWNED ☒ AFRICAN-AMERICAN ☒ ASIAN-AMERICAN OWNED _____ HISPANIC _____ NATIVE AMERICAN OWNED _____ MARK ALL THAT APPLY CERTIFIED: ☒ YES-if yes attach form(s) _____ NO _____	
I certify that information supplied herein is correct and neither the Applicant nor any person in any connection with the applicant is a principal or officer, so far as is known, is now debarred, suspended or otherwise declared ineligible by any agency of the Federal Government, agencies of the State of South Carolina or by Charleston County School District.	
Name: <u>Darlene Roberson</u> Title: <u>Owner & Educational Consultant</u> FEIN or SSN: <u>27-0694211</u> Business License Number: _____ TIN: <u>27-0694211</u>	
AUTHORIZED SIGNATURE: _____ ARE ANY FAMILY OR RELATIVES EMPLOYED BY CCSD: <u>NO</u>	
Contracts & Procurement Services 3999 Bridge View Dr. N. Charleston, SC 29405, Telephone: 843-566-8138 - Fax: 843-566-1972 (Please print or type; you may mail or fax)	

From the District’s perspective, “roberson757@gmail.com” was not a personal email address but was the registered official contact for a District vendor. Trustee Roberson shared confidential and/or privileged Board information with a vendor (i.e., Next Level), which violated the Board member’s fiduciary duties by giving inside information and afforded the vendor an unfair advantage in a contractual matter with the District.⁵

Tables 1 and 2 set forth instances of unauthorized disclosures by Trustee Roberson involving confidential information and attorney-client privileged communications sent to news media outlets on ten (10) occasions and a District vendor on 28 occasions.

Table 1

	Date	Day	Time	News Outlets Emailed
1	8/4/2023	Friday	4:09:00 AM	<u>Live 5 News: WCSC</u>
2	3/5/2024	Tuesday	9:16:10 AM	<u>The Post and Courier</u>
3	3/5/2024	Tuesday	6:44:53 PM	<u>Live 5 News: WCSC</u>
4	12/5/2025	Friday	12:13:08 PM	<u>Live 5 News: WCSC</u>
5	12/6/2025	Saturday	9:35:20 AM	<u>The Post and Courier</u>
6	12/10/2025	Wednesday	5:18:41 AM	<u>Live 5 News: WCSC</u>
7	12/10/2025	Wednesday	8:00:00 AM	<u>The Post and Courier</u>
8	12/10/2025	Wednesday	4:34:53 PM	<u>The Post and Courier</u>
9	12/10/2025	Wednesday	4:36:53 PM	<u>Live 5 News: WCSC</u>
10	12/10/2025	Wednesday	4:44:32 PM	<u>Live 5 News: WCSC</u>

Table 2

	Date	Day	Time	Email Address
1	2/15/2023	Wednesday	9:30:37 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
2	2/16/2023	Thursday	9:46:59 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
3	6/1/2023	Thursday	2:29:39 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
4	9/21/2023	Thursday	5:52:46 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
5	1/7/2024	Sunday	4:07:35 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
6	2/6/2024	Tuesday	4:19:42 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
7	2/8/2024	Thursday	12:33:55 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
8	5/16/2024	Thursday	2:17:10 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
9	5/17/2024	Friday	10:44:02 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
10	5/19/2024	Sunday	8:17:46 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
11	5/20/2024	Monday	11:18:20 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
12	11/20/2024	Wednesday	3:15:17 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
13	4/22/2025	Tuesday	12:54:34 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
14	5/14/2025	Wednesday	6:29:38 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
15	7/29/2025	Tuesday	4:47:50 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
16	9/8/2025	Monday	11:39:46 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
17	10/11/2025	Saturday	9:40:32 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
18	10/22/2025	Wednesday	3:08:48 PM	roberson757@gmail.com

⁵ See also, United States v. Kevin Dion Hollinshead.

19	12/3/2025	Wednesday	8:51:06 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
20	12/5/2025	Friday	6:28:23 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
21	12/7/2025	Sunday	2:40:47 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
22	12/8/2025	Monday	11:55:42 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
23	12/9/2025	Tuesday	1:20:52 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
24	12/10/2025	Wednesday	5:24:59 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
25	12/10/2025	Wednesday	5:46:59 AM	roberson757@gmail.com
26	12/10/2025	Wednesday	4:52:45 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
27	12/10/2025	Wednesday	8:39:01 PM	roberson757@gmail.com
28	12/10/2025	Wednesday	8:39:24 PM	roberson757@gmail.com

V. Board Member Violations of Law and Board Policies

A. Conflict of Interest – Violation of the Ethics Act and Board Policies BCB and BCA

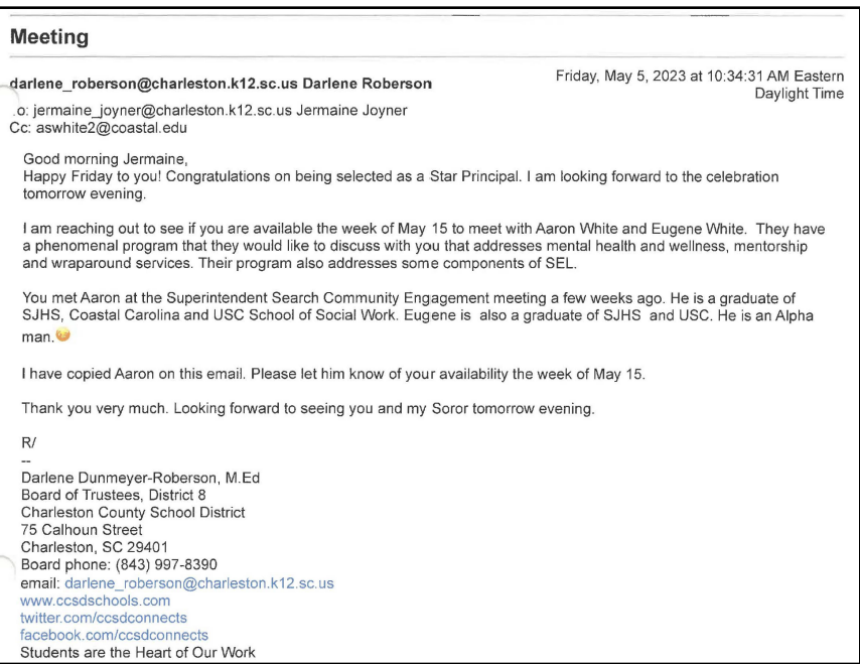
The SCOIG received information that a District Board member violated Board policies [BCB](#)⁶ and/or [BCA](#)⁷ and directly sought to have a District school engage the Board member’s prior campaign manager in a procurement matter. Similarly, according to S.C. Code § 1-6-30(C), the SCOIG received information alleging violation(s) of a statute or rule relating to the purchase of goods or services by a person who had a business relationship with the District, i.e., District vendor # 54611.

The SCOIG reviewed documents provided by the District regarding vendor # 54611, aka, the Circle of Life Foundation (Circle of Life), which operated as a [501\(c\)\(3\)](#) non-profit, but under the professional social worker license of “Aaron S. White, MSW, LISW-CP” that charged the District “\$216 per pupil/hour.”

By email dated 5/5/2023, Trustee Roberson utilized her official District email and directed a District school principal to meet with the vendor and “*let him know your availability the week of May 15*” in further violation of Board policies [BCB](#) and [BCA](#).

⁶ Board policy [BCB](#) stated: “No board member may knowingly use the board member's position to obtain an economic interest for the board member, a family member, an individual with whom the board member is associated, or a business with which the board member is associated.”

⁷ Board policy [BCA](#) stated: “[B]oard members shall maintain a system of communication and interaction that builds upon mutual respect and trust by, among other things: ... refraining from attempting to personally direct any part of the operational organization.”



Records reviewed by the SCOIG demonstrated that Aaron White secured a visit to the school for over five (5) hours because of Trustee Roberson’s email directive to a District staff member.⁸ The District’s visitation logging system [Raptor] captured the below log entry associated with White.

05/16/23 11:14 AM	05/16/23 5:00 PM	St. Johns High School	Main Office	 
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The SCOIG observed official records that Aaron White was associated with and served as the campaign manager for Trustee Roberson during her 2022 election campaign for a seat on the District’s Board.⁹ The SC Ethics Public Reporting data for the Board member identified the following entries:

Nov 22, 2022	Aaron White	\$8,000.00	961 Hazelwood Lane Summerville SC, SC 29486	Campaign Management Fee		
Aaron White	Quarter 3 & Pre-Election (General) Report 2022	7/24/2022	\$850.00	Expenditure	General - 11/8/2022	Reimbursement for fundraiser catering fee

Trustee Roberson’s email not only violated Board policy [BCB](#) when as a Board member she “*is associated*” with the person/vendor seeking an economic benefit from the District, but potentially violated S.C. Code § 8-13-700(B) of the State Ethics Act that states in part...”*No public official, public member...may make, participate in making or in any way attempt to use his office...to influence a governmental decision in which he...an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated has an economic interest...*¹⁰

⁸ Per the [Raptor system User Guide](#), p. 55: “By default, Raptor is configured to automatically sign out all visitors 5:00 PM.” As such, whenever the visitor sign out time was precisely “5:00 PM” it was likely because the visitor failed to properly sign out when they left.

⁹ The SCOIG reviewed available South Carolina Department of Revenue records and confirmed the “\$8,000 Campaign Management Fee” was not disclosed as 2022 income by Aaron White.

¹⁰ See generally, State Ethics Commission decision and order, C2014-156, [Griswold v. Loftis](#) (October 26, 2016).

B. Failure to File Multiple South Carolina Tax Returns and Report More Than \$248,000 of Income

In early 2022, Trustee Roberson, dba, Next Level (a District vendor) obtained money under false pretenses via fraudulent invoicing scheme(s) as set forth in Section V, Part D of this report.

The W-9 form submitted to the District on behalf of Next Level indicated that although the “*Business name*” was “*Next Level Educational Services, LLC*,” the “*Name (as shown on your income tax return)*” was “*Darlene Roberson*.” Similarly, the SCOIG observed EFT payment documents from the District indicated that the “*Pay To the Order Of*” field stated: “*DARLENE ROBERSON DBA NEXT LEVEL EDUCATIONAL SERVICES LLC*.” Accordingly, the payments from the District to the vendor were ultimately personal income to “Darlene Roberson.”

The SCOIG reviewed available South Carolina Department of Revenue (SCDOR) records (as of 8/5/2026) and was unable to conclude that Trustee Roberson properly reported District payments received by Next Level to SCDOR for tax year 2022. Trustee Roberson filed her 2022 tax return (MFJ – married filing joint) with SCDOR on or about 3/28/2024.

Based on a review and comparison of District vendor payments made to Trustee Roberson, dba, Next Level and SCDOR records determined that more than \$248,000 in income was not reported to SCDOR based on the following:

- For tax years 2019-2021, Trustee Roberson, as a District vendor, failed to file tax returns and report income of more than \$195,400,
- For tax year 2022, Trustee Roberson, as a current District Board member, underreported her income by more than \$43,000 when her MFJ tax return was filed on or about 3/28/2024, and
- For tax year 2024, Trustee Roberson, as a current District Board member, failed to file a tax return and report income of \$9,600 received as a District Board member.

C. Fraudulent VA Mortgage Loan or Failure to Maintain District Residence?

The SCOIG received information that alleged Trustee Roberson did not reside in Charleston County but in Dorchester County when she filed for a District Board position and was subsequently elected to the District Board in November 2022.

The SCOIG reviewed South Carolina State Election Commission records for Trustee Roberson, including FRM 1008-200912 aka “*Statement of Intention of Candidacy*” dated “04/15/2022” at “12:28 pm.” The document, under oath, lists Trustee Roberson’s address as: “**** *Royal Harbor Rd Hollywood 29449*.”

The SCOIG reviewed publicly available records of the Charleston County [Register of Deeds](#) and identified Trustee Roberson’s current address of “**** *Farm House Rd, Ravenel, South Carolina 29470*.” However, this search identified additional mortgage documents dated “*August 18, 2023*” [Book 1199 Page 308] that attested that the legal residence for Trustee Roberson was elsewhere in the state and not within Charleston County prior to the purchase of the residence in Ravenel, South Carolina:

Parties

(A) “**Borrower**” is Ronald Reginald Roberson and Darlene Dunmeyer Roberson, Husband and Wife, As Joint Tenants with Rights of Survivorship and not Tenants in Common

currently residing at [REDACTED] Dawnshire Ct., Summerville, South Carolina 29485

According to the [Dorchester real property tax records](#), “*** Dawnshire Ct., Summerville, South Carolina 29485” was TMS#:1710601011000: a 2-story 2,161 square foot residential property built in 1976 located in Dorchester County.

Additionally, the SCOIG reviewed official public records that identified Trustee Roberson was “a citizen and resident of Charleston County, South Carolina and has been so in excess of one year prior to [9/30/2021]” and established her South Carolina residency before 9/30/2020.¹¹

The SCOIG analysis determined the mortgage documents related to a VA mortgage loan for Trustee Roberson’s current address in Charleston County identified her residence in Dorchester County for the relevant period leading up to the date of the mortgage, i.e., 8/18/2023.¹² Trustee Roberson’s own sworn statement on the VA mortgage loan declared that on or about 8/18/2023, she resided at “*** Dawnshire Ct., Summerville, South Carolina 29485” and therefore was not a qualified elector for the District. The sworn declaration was made in furtherance of a material transaction, i.e., “\$790,000.00.”

As such, Trustee Roberson either committed VA mortgage loan fraud by attesting she resided in Dorchester County on 8/18/2023 when she actually resided at **** Royal Harbor Road, Hollywood, SC (Charleston County), a violation of 18 U.S.C. §1014 (bank fraud) and 18 U.S.C. §1001 (false statement), or she vacated her District Board position when she moved to *** Dawnshire Ct., Summerville, SC (Dorchester County) between her November 2022 election to the District’s Board and her purchase of **** Farm House Road, Ravenell, SC (Charleston County) on or about 8/18/2023.

[S.C. Att’y Gen. Op. \(June 11, 2021\)](#) explains: “It is this Office’s opinion that a board member of the School District of Pickens County would likewise vacate or forfeit his office by operation of law if she fails to maintain her residence in the district from which she was elected.” See also, [S.C. Code § 7-1-25\(A\) and § \(D\)\(3\)](#).

Serving while disqualified constitutes misconduct in office and persistent neglect of the duties of the office.

D. Fraudulent Billing and Potential Misuse of Title I Funds as a District Vendor

An SCOIG review of the District’s transparency reports identified \$239,103.65 was paid to Trustee Roberson through two service agreements as a District vendor prior to her election to the District’s Board. The service agreements provided educational support services through the school counseling department to assist students with at-risk characteristics and behaviors and determine critical needs of potential high school dropouts to become successful in school. The SCOIG identified the following District service agreements with Next Level:

- [02001484](#), dated 10/25/2019, which stated “compensation for services during each term or extension thereof, CCSD shall reimburse the Contractor a not-to-exceed fee” of \$43,200.
- [2100680](#), dated 08/12/2020, which stated “compensation for services during each term or extension thereof, CCSD shall reimburse the Contractor a not-to-exceed fee” of \$42,000.¹³

¹¹ Dorchester County Family Court (2021DR181192).

¹² Section (§) 8 of the mortgage documents stated: “Borrower will be in Default if, during the Loan application process, Borrower or any persons or entities acting at Borrower’s direction or with Borrower’s knowledge or consent gave materially false, misleading, or inaccurate information or statements to Lender...” See also, § I.

¹³ Both Next Level service agreement(s) utilized an address at “1805 Clemson Road #290148, Suite 120, Columbia, SC 29229.” Suite 120 did not exist and #290148 was a Post Office Box (PO Box) at the Sandhills Post Office located at 1805 Clemson Road.

Charleston County School District

CHECKS BROWSE

Cash Account	Check #	Check Date	Warrant	Clr	Cleared Da	Amount
00010000 101200	946458	11/07/2019	11/07/19	Y	11/19/2019	2,400.00
00010000 101200	140691	06/09/2022	06/09/22	Y	07/31/2022	23,378.65
00010000 101200	137733	02/24/2022	02/24/22	Y	03/31/2022	20,000.00
00010000 101200	133532	09/09/2021	09/09/21	Y	10/31/2021	13,200.00
00010000 101200	132836	08/12/2021	081221A	Y	09/30/2021	.28
00010000 101200	132724	08/05/2021	080521A	Y	09/30/2021	4,999.72
00010000 101200	131130	05/27/2021	05/27/21	Y	06/30/2021	7,500.00
00010000 101200	130559	05/06/2021	05/06/21	Y	06/30/2021	9,750.00
00010000 101200	129806	04/01/2021	04/01/21	Y	05/31/2021	4,406.25
00010000 101200	129284	03/11/2021	03/11/21	Y	04/30/2021	12,000.00
00010000 101200	128384	02/04/2021	02/04/21	Y	03/31/2021	11,250.00
00010000 101200	127708	01/07/2021	01/07/21	Y	02/28/2021	7,500.00
00010000 101200	127290	12/10/2020	12/10/20	Y	01/31/2021	11,625.00
00010000 101200	126497	11/05/2020	11/05/20	Y	12/31/2020	12,468.75
00010000 101200	125837	10/08/2020	10/08/20	Y	11/30/2020	5,250.00
00010000 101200	125559	09/24/2020	09/24/20	Y	10/31/2020	15,750.00
00010000 101200	125080	08/27/2020	08/27/20	Y	09/30/2020	9,750.00
00010000 101200	124296	07/09/2020	070920A	Y	08/31/2020	9,600.00
00010000 101200	123767	06/04/2020	06/04/20	Y	07/31/2020	13,425.00
00010000 101200	123465	05/14/2020	05/14/20	Y	06/30/2020	5,400.00
00010000 101200	122799	04/02/2020	04/03/20	Y	05/31/2020	7,500.00
00010000 101200	122105	03/05/2020	03/05/20	Y	04/30/2020	8,400.00
00010000 101200	121389	02/13/2020	02/13/20	Y	03/31/2020	9,750.00
00010000 101200	120032	12/19/2019	12/19/19	Y	01/31/2020	6,600.00
00010000 101200	119435	12/05/2019	12/05/19	Y	01/31/2020	7,200.00

Vendor 45482 ROBERSON DARLENE has 25 Checks for: 239,103.65

The District informed the SCOIG that “[Title 1](#)” funds were utilized for payment of Next Level: “PO#2001484” and split funded between Funds 371 and 201 which are EIA Palmetto Priority and Title I, respectively.¹⁴ Title I funds are statutorily authorized to provide additional educational assistance to children from low-income families to help them meet challenging state academic standards.

The SCOIG reviewed all available District records for Next Level and immediately identified items of concern. For example, the marketing materials provided to the District by Next Level stated: “*NLES is licensed to conduct business in the State of South Carolina by the South Carolina State Corporation Commission.*” No such entity exists in South Carolina government.

1. Fraudulent Line Items on Multiple Next Level Invoices

Invoice #033 dated 5/27/2022, contained multiple late fees related to an “April 18, 2022” invoice(s). Apart from the multiple references for services and/or fees related to “April 18, 2022” on Next Level’s invoice #033 - a 10% late fee applied after 30 days was a violation of section (§) 45 of the District Procurement Code and S.C. Code § 11-35-45(B).

A 10% fee compounded monthly equates to an effective annual rate [EAR] of 216.9% in interest [$\{EAR\} = (((1 + 10\%)^{(365/30)}) - 1)$]. If only 39 actual days had lapsed, yet three (3) compounded 10% monthly late fees were assessed – then the invoice is potentially fraudulent. Invoice #033 was dated (5/27/2022), a mere 39 days from “April 18, 2022.”

¹⁴ The District informed the SCOIG that PO#2202980 used “EIA Priority” funds; PO#2100680 “was Title I funded.”

INVOICE



Next Level Educational Services, LLC
 Darlene Roberson, Educational Consultant
 4332 Royal Harbor Road, Hollywood, SC 29449, UNITED STATES
 Phone: +1 703-731-2260; robersondd@nextlevel-education.com;
 Website: www.nextlevel-education.com

Invoice No#: 033
 Invoice Date: May 27, 2022
 Due Date: May 27, 2022

\$23,378.65
 AMOUNT DUE



BILL TO
 carlotta_goodwin@charleston.k12.sc.us

#	ITEMS & DESCRIPTION	QTY/HRS	PRICE	AMOUNT(\$)
1	Educational Support Services: SJHS Please see invoice dated April 18, 2022	1	\$11,478.33	\$11,478.33
2	Educational Support Services: SJHS Please see invoice dated April 18, 2022	1	\$5,250.00	\$5,250.00
3	Late fee Please see invoice dated April 18, 2022	1	\$1,672.83	\$1,672.83
4	Late fee Late fee for invoice submitted April 18, 2022	1	\$1,840.11	\$1,840.11
5	Late fee Late fee for invoice not paid by May 18, 2022	1	\$2,024.12	\$2,024.12
6	Late fee Late fee for invoice: May 19 - 31	1	\$1,113.26	\$1,113.26
Subtotal				\$23,378.65
Shipping				\$0.00
TOTAL				\$23,378.65 USD

NOTES TO CUSTOMER
 Thank you for your business!

TERMS AND CONDITIONS
 Please make all direct deposits payable to Next Level Educational Services, LLC. A late fee of 10% will be charged for payments not received 30 days after billing date. Next late fee: June 18, 2022

PO 2202980

OK to receive & pay per John Cobb.

6/1/2022

RECEIVED ON-LINE
 JUN 06 2022

RECEIVED
 JUN 06 2022
 ACCOUNTING

The District identified an earlier version of Next Level's invoice #033 for the SCOIG's review (dated 5/23/2022 and due 5/23/2022) that was for \$22,265.39. There was no item #6 on the earlier version of invoice #033 but was added later. The District provided the following email:

Final Notice for Payment

roberson757@gmail.com Darlene Roberson
 To: stephen_larson@charleston.k12.sc.us
 Cc: carlotta_goodwin@charleston.k12.sc.us, johne_cobb@charleston.k12.sc.us JOHNE COBB

Tuesday, May 24, 2022 at 12:11:21 PM Eastern Daylight Time

Mr. Larson,
 Please see the attached updated invoice for payment. This is my final attempt to collect payment from you.

R/
 Darlene Dunmeyer Roberson, M.Ed
 CEO/Educational Consultant
 Next Level Educational Services, LLC
 803.681.0435 (office/cell)
 866.844.4356 (fax)
 email: roberson757@gmail.com
 website: www.nextlevel-education.com

"Education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another."
G. K. Chesterson

Attachments:
 Invoice - 033.pdf 129k

The records reviewed by the SCOIG indicated that the amended version of invoice #033 occurred after the vendor informed the District: *“This is my final attempt to collect payment from you.”* The attachment to the email *“Invoice – 033.pdf”* [size *“129k”*] was the version of invoice #033 that did not list line item #6. The properties of the PDF indicated it was created *“5/23/2022 7:43:44 PM.”*

The amended version of invoice #033 (dated 5/27/2022) added an additional 5% after the vendor’s statement: *“This is my final attempt to collect payment from you.”* This represented 10% compounding per *“30 days”* late fee calculations for at least three (3) iterations even though there were only 39 days between 5/27/2022 and 4/18/2022.

Next Level exploited the weaknesses in the District’s accounts payable processes that allowed illegal late fees stacked into items #3, #4, #5, and #6 on invoice #033 after the successful receipt of an illegal late fee on invoice #022. The SCOIG observed that the processing remarks on invoice #033 stated *“ok to receive and pay per John Cobb.”* The District confirmed that Next Level was paid \$23,378.65 for invoice #033 via EFT #140691 on 6/9/2022.

The District informed the SCOIG that the District’s procurement official was on leave pending an investigation for improperly disclosing procurement information to Trustee Roberson. The SCOIG further observed District records indicated that the District official who gave the *“ok”* to pay the illegal late fees was the executive director for federal programs.¹⁵

In addition, Next Level [invoice #029](#) dated 2/23/2022, submitted to the District for *“\$20,000.00”* claimed to be for *“Educational Support Services: SJHS Educational Support Services SY 2021”* without any dates of service indicated on the invoice. The SCOIG observed the following [eight invoices](#) totaled \$87,632.00 from this same vendor claiming services rendered over eleven months in 2021:

- #016 - \$11,250 – January 2021
- #017 - \$12,000 – February 2021
- #018 - \$4,406.25 – March 2021
- #019 - \$9,750 – April 2021
- #020 - \$7,500 – May 2021
- #021 - \$5,000 – May and June 2021
- #022 - \$13,200 – June 2021
- #027 - \$24,525.75 – August, September, October, November, and December 2021

Next Level’s potential fraudulent submission of the invoice(s) and the resulting payment using Title I funds caused a direct waste of educational funds. Next Level caused the District to improperly disburse these funds and deprived eligible low-income students of critical services such as targeted tutoring, instructional materials, and smaller class sizes. This misuse not only adversely affected student academic outcomes but also undermined the program’s core objective of narrowing achievement gaps and exposed education funds to increased risk of waste, fraud, and abuse.

¹⁵ John Cobb, Executive Director for Federal Programs.

2. Effective Annual Rate of 216.9% “Late Fee” Charged by Next Level

The SCOIG analysis identified several areas of concern and questioned the integrity of the vendor’s billing practices. According to the [District Procurement Code](#), and consistent with [S.C. Code § 11-35-45\(B\)](#), the maximum allowable late payment fee is 15% APR. (See below)

SECTION 45. Payment for goods and services received by District. (S.C. Code § 11-35-45)

(A) The District is responsible for the payment of all supplies, services, or information technology within thirty work days after the acceptance of the goods or services and proper invoice, whichever is received later, and shall pay an amount not to exceed fifteen percent per annum, as established by the South Carolina Comptroller General for state agencies, on any unpaid balance which exceeds the thirty work-day period, if the vendor specifies on the statement or the invoice submitted to the District that a late penalty is applicable if not paid within thirty work days after the acceptance of goods or services.

(B) The thirty-day period shall not begin until the District certifies its satisfaction with the received goods or services and proper invoice.

The SCOIG reviewed the service agreements and accompanying extensions between the District and Next Level and determined that two Next Level invoices sought illegal late payment fees totaling \$7,850.32 as depicted on invoices #022 and #033:

INVOICE																															
	Next Level Educational Services, LLC Darlene Roberson, Educational Consultant 1805 Clemson Road, #290148, Columbia, SC 29229, UNITED STATES robersondd@nextlevel-education.com; Website: www.nextlevel-education.com																														
Invoice No#: 022 Invoice Date: Jul 12, 2021 Reference: Purchase order# 2100680 Vendor# 45482 Due Date: Jul 12, 2021	 \$13,200.00 AMOUNT DUE																														
BILL TO me*****@charleston.k12.sc.us																															
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>#</th><th>ITEMS & DESCRIPTION</th><th>QTY/HRS</th><th>PRICE</th><th>AMOUNT(\$)</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>1</td><td>Educational Support Services: NCHS Dates of Services: June 1 – 30, 2021</td><td>16</td><td>\$750.00</td><td>\$12,000.00</td></tr><tr><td>2</td><td>Late fee Payment for August 2020 and June 2021</td><td>1</td><td>\$1,200.00</td><td>\$1,200.00</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Subtotal</td><td></td><td>\$13,200.00</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">Shipping</td><td></td><td>\$0.00</td></tr><tr><td colspan="3">TOTAL</td><td></td><td>\$13,200.00 USD</td></tr></tbody></table>	#	ITEMS & DESCRIPTION	QTY/HRS	PRICE	AMOUNT(\$)	1	Educational Support Services: NCHS Dates of Services: June 1 – 30, 2021	16	\$750.00	\$12,000.00	2	Late fee Payment for August 2020 and June 2021	1	\$1,200.00	\$1,200.00	Subtotal				\$13,200.00	Shipping				\$0.00	TOTAL				\$13,200.00 USD	
#	ITEMS & DESCRIPTION	QTY/HRS	PRICE	AMOUNT(\$)																											
1	Educational Support Services: NCHS Dates of Services: June 1 – 30, 2021	16	\$750.00	\$12,000.00																											
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Subtotal				\$13,200.00																											
Shipping				\$0.00																											
TOTAL				\$13,200.00 USD																											
NOTES TO CUSTOMER Thank you for your business!																															
TERMS AND CONDITIONS Please make all direct deposits payable to Next Level Educational Services, LLC. A 10% late fee will be charged for payments not received 30 days after billing date.																															

For invoice #22, line item #1, in the amount of \$12,000, was for “Dates of Services: June 1 – 30, 2021.” This line item claimed 16 days at \$750 per day for the period of 6/1-30/2021. However, [invoice #021](#), dated 6/22/2021, included eight days of service for June 2021 (6/3-4, 10-11, 16-19/2021). The SCOIG concluded there is a high risk that the District may have been billed twice for days of alleged service in June 2021 (16 days for invoice #022 and 8 days for invoice #021 for a total of 24 days in June 2021).

For invoice #022, line item #2, a late fee in the amount of \$1,200 was assessed for August 2020 and June 2021. The SCOIG determined the \$1,200 was simply 10% of the \$12,000 for line item #1. The description of line item #2 referenced a payment for “August 2020 and June 2021.” The SCOIG determined the following:

- [Invoice #010](#), dated 8/19/2020, was for 13 days of service at \$750 per day (\$9,750) for the period of 8/3-7, 10-14, 17-19/2020. The District’s records show that Next Level was previously paid for invoice #010 in August 2020.
- [Invoice #011](#) dated 9/18/2020, was for eight days of service in August 2020 at \$750 per day (\$6,000) for the period of 8/20-21, 24-28, 31/2020. The District’s records show that Next Level was paid for invoice #011 in September of 2020.¹⁶

No documentation existed that supports or substantiates the legitimacy of a vendor charging the District a late fee for a payment that was actually paid approximately ten (10) months earlier in August 2020. Additionally, no documentation existed that supports a “late” notice on 7/12/2021 for alleged services rendered in June 2021 when June 2021 was invoiced twice by [invoice #021](#) dated 6/22/2021 and again by [invoice #022](#) dated 7/12/2021 – even assuming a 10% per month late fee was acceptable.

E. Improper Procurement Process Associated with Board Member – Circle of Life Foundation

As previously established in Section V, Part A of this report, the campaign manager for Trustee Roberson was affiliated with Circle of Life, a District vendor. Circle of Life was a Summerville, South Carolina-based nonprofit organization registered on 3/29/2023. The organization offered mentorship, mental health and wellness, and wraparound services to underserved communities. Aaron White served as the executive director/president, with Eugene White serving as vice-president.

On 1/12/2024, the District advertised solicitation [P2419](#) for “*Student Services for Mentoring, Academic Support and Mental Health Wellness*” for at-risk students for holistic, individualized support plans designed for youths with complex behavioral or mental health challenges.

The SCOIG determined there was no executed contract and therefore no “contractual parameters.” The District advised the SCOIG that: “*They issued an [intent to award](#), but no contract was awarded.*”¹⁷ As one District employee questioned: “*When I look at this proposal, (20-30 students between St. John's and Haut Gap), I don't see anything unique that Mr. White would be doing that our internal staff couldn't already do? (including direct services). Do you?*”¹⁸

A summary analysis of the Circle of Life procurement identified the following improper procurement practices:

- **Violation of District procurement code and S.C. Code §§ 11-35-20 and 11-35-30**
 - S.C. Code §§ 11-35-20, 11-35-30 requires good faith, fairness, and ethical conduct.
 - Aaron White visited a District school for several hours on 1/26/2024 (during the open RFP period) and submitted a revised proposal afterward—an opportunity not afforded other offerors in violation of the District’s procurement code and RFP non-contact rules.
- **Improper use of public resources – vendor obtained testimonial from a District employee**
 - Aaron White solicited a letter of support from a District employee using District resources and included it in the official RFP response—an improper use of public resources.
- **Invoice payment discrepancies and inflated charges**

¹⁶ The total for invoice #011 was \$15,750; 8 days in August and 13 days in September 2020.

¹⁷ The District explained that the “*procurement official resigned in the midst of an investigation partially related to [Circle of Life].*”

¹⁸ [Email dated 7/20/2023](#) @ 4:51:37 AM from District executive director of Student Support Services.

- Circle of Life received a total of \$64,584 (299 pupil-hours at \$216) for group session services that were billed per student – an effective rate up to nine (9) times the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) group psychotherapy benchmark of \$23.78 per person/hour.
- On one verified date (3.8 hours on site), the invoice charged \$1,944 versus an SCDHHS group-psychotherapy benchmark of approximately \$813—a 139% markup. Arrangement lacked adequate documentation and oversight to prevent inflated charges to public funds.
- Multiple billed dates had no corresponding visitor-log entries.
- **Failure to conduct background checks of all vendor employees in contact with students**
 - Circle of Life (registered only in March 2023) provided no background checks, insurance, and evidence of prior successful implementation as required by the RFP; a failure of compliance with RFP provisions.
 - No evidence existed that the District conducted background checks, obtained parental consent, or executed a formal contract.
- **Public access to student protected information**
 - A Google Drive link was created at the vendor’s request that shared a publicly accessible information of full student names, parent contacts, schedules, and sensitive behavioral/family notes that remained accessible to the public through the URL in violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); links were deactivated only after SCOIG notification.
- **Exploitation of District student photos and student client testimonials**
 - Vendor’s performance report contained student photographs and handwritten testimonials that were obtained without documented FERPA releases.
 - Solicitation of testimonials from current minor clients in a school setting violates National Association of Social Workers, American Counseling Association, and South Carolina social-work ethical standards.
 - Vendor met with students alone on District property with no staff present and no background checks on file.
- **Inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual**
 - The vendor misrepresented District payments on IRS Form 990 as “*payroll*” contributions rather than invoiced services.
 - Aaron and Eugene White were the sole officers and the individuals that delivered the services to the District.
 - High risk of impermissible private inurement under [501\(c\)\(3\) rules](#).

VI. Findings and Recommendations

Finding #1: The SCOIG identified acts of malfeasance, misfeasance, conflicts of interest, policy violations, misconduct in office, and neglect of duty in office demonstrated by Trustee Roberson in the following areas:

- Disclosure of executive session information
- Disclosure of confidential and/or privileged Board information to news media outlets and a District vendor
- Violation of the Ethics Act and Board policies/Use of Board position for personal gain
- Failure to report taxable income as a District vendor and Board member
- Failure to participate in the evaluation process of the superintendent
- Fraudulent billing of services as a vendor of the District

- Fraudulent VA mortgage loan and/or violation of the residency requirement for a school board member

Taken together, the actions demonstrate willful misconduct in office and persistent neglect of Trustee Roberson's fundamental obligations of loyalty, confidentiality, and impartial governance. Under [S.C. Code § 59-19-60](#), such conduct furnishes grounds for the Governor to remove Trustee Roberson after notice and an opportunity to be heard.

Recommendation #1: The SCOIG recommends that pursuant to the provisions of [S.C. Code § 59-19-60](#), the Governor consider removing Trustee Roberson from the District's Board of Trustees.

Finding #2: The SCOIG identified repeated violations of Board policies by one or more Board members, inadvertent and/or intentional, irrespective of advice given by legal counsel to adhere to Board policies and repeated notifications provided by the Board secretary. Among these policy violations are:

- Direct contact with District staff in operational matters.
- Direct contact with District staff in procurement matters.
- Direct contact with outside legal counsel in an individual capacity that incurred costs to the District in violation of Policy BB.
- Irrelevant or disruptive behavior in Board meetings in violation of policies BCA and BC.
- Improper quorums in violation of S.C. Code § 30-4-20(d) of the FOIA.
- Unauthorized disclosure of confidential information in violation of Policy BE.

Recommendation #2a: The SCOIG recommends that all Board members receive annual training on all Board policies with particular emphasis on their oversight and fiduciary roles, duty of confidentiality and policies BE, BCA and BC.

Recommendation #2b: The SCOIG recommends the District provide members with guidance and caution against Board members directly or indirectly lobbying for vendors or others who seek to do business with the District.

Finding #3: The SCOIG determined the contractual agreement between the District, and its outside legal counsel was ambiguous in its language that allowed one or more Board members to engage the outside counsel in an individual capacity that resulted in the expenditure of more than \$74,384 by the District without the consent of the Board body in violation of policies BB and BIE.

Recommendation #3: Based on the review of the current District policies, the SCOIG recommends the following changes to improve District Board policies:

- The SCOIG recommends the District modify its existing contract with outside counsel and Board policy to prohibit any individual Board member from being able to incur legal expenses when not acting as the Board chair and/or at the consent of the Board as a body.
- The SCOIG recommends that the District set clear legal boundaries describing who is primarily responsible for categories of legal work, i.e., internal or outside counsel.
- The SCOIG recommends that the District designate who will advise the Board regarding meetings and any conflicts that may arise, i.e., internal or outside counsel.

Finding #4: The SCOIG determined that confidential and/or attorney-client privileged Board information was disclosed to a vendor and the media by one or more Board members which violated their fiduciary duties. The

integrity of the District's information control was compromised by these disclosures and violated District policies BCA and BE.

Recommendation #4: The SCOIG recommends the Board amend policy BCA to incorporate explicit and binding rules for verified allegations of wrongdoing by Board members.

Finding #5: The SCOIG identified numerous examples of unlawful billing practices by two vendors that maintained a business affiliation with a Board member, i.e., Next Level Educational Services, LLC (Next Level) and Circle of Life Foundation (Circle of Life). A review of the District's procurement records for these two vendors identified double-billing errors, exorbitant late-fee billings, and undue influence by a Board member through direct contact with a District principal, all in violation of the District's procurement code, policy BCA and the State Ethics Act.

Recommendation #5a: The SCOIG recommends that District procurement and finance personnel receive remedial training as to what is acceptable for the District to pay.

Recommendation #5b: The SCOIG recommends that the District engage a qualified forensic auditor to evaluate all the invoices and payments for Next Level to ensure the District's payments were proper. Additionally, the SCOIG recommends that the District pursue all legal remedies that may be available to recoup any improper charges.

Recommendation #5c: The SCOIG recommends that the District consider any applicable debarment procedures relating to any vendor that may have willfully violated the procurement process.

Recommendation #5d: Pursuant to S.C. Code § 1-6-40(B), the SCOIG shall refer this matter to the appropriate law enforcement and prosecuting authority to ascertain whether a violation of S.C. Code 16-13-240 [*Obtaining Signature or Property by False Pretenses*] occurred if the submission of a fraudulent invoice resulted in the improper disbursement of \$43,378.65 in public funds.

Finding #6: During the review of the Circle of Life procurement review, the SCOIG identified weaknesses in its vetting process while the vendor was engaged with District students. These weaknesses included:

- Background checks were not conducted of Circle of Life staff.
- District staff did not observe the engagement of Circle of Life staff and District students.

Recommendation #6: The SCOIG recommends that the District consider the following:

- Re-evaluate the District's background check process and procedures for vendors to ensure that background checks are fully conducted both at the outset of engagement and at least annually for outside vendors who enter school grounds during school hours and particularly when engaging with students.
- Adding language to any vendor contract that a vendor confirms it is in full compliance with all applicable licensing and tax reporting.
- Re-evaluate the District's processes and procedures whenever a vendor seeks to meet with students (individually or as a group) alone without any observation by District staff.
- Analyze the implications of this counseling service and – if warranted – report gross violations to the appropriate professional licensing board.

- Pursue a refund from this vendor if the services were not rendered in compliance with applicable ethical standards.
- Notify the parents of the students who may have certain remedies if the services did not comply with applicable ethical standards.
- Require all District employees and Board members to execute an annual attestation that they do NOT have any affiliation or financial benefit from any District vendor/contractor.

VII. Summary Justification for Removal of a Board Member

The suspension or removal of an elected or appointed official from office by the Governor of South Carolina occurs after the individual has been charged with a felony crime. This authority is set forth in Article VI, Section 8 of the South Carolina Constitution. During his tenure in office, Governor McMaster issued 31 suspensions/removals of elected or appointed officials and rescinded seven of these. Two suspension/removals and two reinstatements were attributed to public school board members.

In 2022, S.C. Code § 59-19-60 was amended to provide authority to the Governor for the removal of school district trustees for certain enumerated provisions. [S.C. Code § 59-19-60](#) (Removal of trustees; vacancies) states as follows:

*Notwithstanding any provision of law to the contrary, school district trustees who wilfully commit or engage in an **act of malfeasance, misfeasance, chronic unexcused absenteeism, conflicts of interest, misconduct in office, or persistent neglect of duty in office** [SCOIG emphasis], or are deemed medically incompetent or medically incapacitated, are subject to removal by the Governor upon any of the foregoing causes being made to appear to the satisfaction of the Governor. Before removing any such officer, the Governor shall inform him in writing of the specific charges brought against him and give him an opportunity on reasonable notice to be heard. Vacancies occurring in the membership of any board of trustees for any cause shall be filled for the unexpired term in the same manner as provided for full-term appointments.*

A. Summary of Violations of Unauthorized Disclosures, Board Policies, Federal And State Laws

Subject: **Trustee X** | Charleston County School District (CCSD) Board of Trustees

#	Allegation	Applicable Law / Policy	Occurrences / Period	Source & Key Evidence
1	Unauthorized disclosure of confidential / attorney-client privileged information	• Common Law Misconduct in Office and/or S.C. Code § 8-1-80 (Misconduct of Public Officers) • Board Policy BCA – Board Member Code of Ethics	38 occurrences Feb 2023 – Dec 2025	Emails forwarded to news outlets (10) and a vendor email address (28)
2	Unauthorized disclosure of Executive Session discussions and communications	• Board Policy BCA – Board Member Code of Ethics • Board Policy BE – Board Meetings Policy	Not separately quantified	Closely related to Allegation 1; specific instance-level detail not provided in source data

3	Conflict of interest / ethics violation / use of Board position for personal gain	• S.C. Code § 8-13-700(B) • Board Policy BCA – Board Member Code of Ethics • Board Policy BCB – Board Member Conflict of Interest	May 5, 2023	Email from Trustee X to CCSD principal
4	Disruptive conduct during Board meetings	• Board Policy BC – Board Meeting Protocol • Board Policy BE – Board Meetings Policy	Nov 3, 2025 Feb 25, 2026	11/3/2025 Regular & Special Called Meeting video (~4:50) – parliamentary issue 2/25/2026 Board Meeting video (2:50:36) – Education Foundation Nominee 2/25/2026 Board Meeting Minutes Item 12.B
5	Failure to file taxes and related tax violations	• S.C. Code § 12-54-43 (Failure to File) • S.C. Code § 12-54-44 (Willfulness) • S.C. Code § 12-54-155 (Under Reporting) • S.C. Code § 8-1-100 (Removal for Indictment)	2019–2022: \$238,703.65 2024: \$9,600.00	Tax records and Vendor invoices (District payments to Trustee X, d/b/a Vendor)
6	Refusal to participate in Superintendent evaluation	• Board Policy BBA – Board Powers and Duties • Board Policy CBI – Evaluation of the Superintendent • S.C. Code § 59-19-80 • S.C. Code § 59-19-90	May 23, 2026	Email from Trustee X
7	Fraudulent billing as a District vendor	• District Procurement Code • S.C. Code § 11-35-45(B) • S.C. Code § 16-13-240	Invoice #022 – 7/12/2021 Invoice #029 – 2/23/2022 Invoice #033 – 5/27/2022	Invoice #022 Invoice #029 Invoice #033
8-A	Mortgage Fraud / Conspiracy to Commit Mortgage Fraud - Alternative Residency Issue(s)	18 U.S.C. §1014 (bank fraud) and 18 U.S.C. §1001 (false statement)	Aug 18, 2023	Charleston County ROD Book 1199 Page 308
8-B	Violation of the residency requirement for Board membership - Alternative to Mortgage Fraud	• S.C. Code § 7-1-25(A) and (D)(3) • S.C. Const. art. XVII, § 1 and art. VI	2023 – 2026	Residency status throughout the relevant period - Charleston County ROD Book 1199 Page 308

Additional Observations & Context

• **Allegation 1 tracking:** Detailed occurrence log (Date; Method of Transmission; Recipient; Offense type – ACP / Exec. Sess. / other) available in Report body. Board Members A–H recorded as none based on SCOIG analysis of emails provided by the District.

• **Allegation 5 tax notes:** Subject was possibly a resident of another state for a minor portion of the relevant years. Services underlying the payments were performed in South Carolina; apportionment of that income stream to the South Carolina Department of Revenue is proper.

One or more links to SCOIG source material(s) are encrypted to preclude public disclosure.

B. Misconduct in Office and Persistent Neglect of Duty

A school-district trustee who willfully commits or engages in malfeasance, misfeasance, misconduct in office, or persistent neglect of duty is subject to removal by the Governor. As enumerated in the summary of violations chart in Section A, Trustee Roberson violated various District Board policies and state law when she:

- Disclosed attorney/client communications and executive session materials to news media outlets on ten occasions and a District vendor on 28 occasions.
- Violated [S.C. Code § 8-13-700\(B\)](#) of the State Ethics Act and Board policy BCB when she sent an email directive to a District principal to meet with her former campaign manager that secured

a multi-hour school visit in a procurement matter. The use of her Board position to influence a governmental decision with an associated individual constitutes misconduct in office and misfeasance.

- Failed to file income tax returns with SCDOR for multiple years as a District vendor and Board member that included the failure to report more than \$248,000 in income in violation of Title 12, Chapter 6 of the S.C. Code of Laws.
- Submitted fraudulent invoices to the District as a vendor.
- Submitted a false statement on a VA mortgage loan application in violation of 18 U.S.C. §1014 and §1001, which also established Trustee Roberson did not live in the District 8 for a period of time subsequent to her election to the Board.
- Violated Board policy CBI [Evaluation of the Superintendent] when on 5/23/2026, Trustee Roberson stated to the Board chair ... *"I will not be participating in this process..."* in the following District email:

On Sat, May 23, 2026 at 8:06 AM Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

I will not be participating in this process. I will submit a statement for the record at the appropriate time.

R/
Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson, M.Ed
Board of Trustees, District 8
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401
Board phone: (843) 997-8390
email: darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us
www.ccsdschools.com
twitter.com/ccsdconnects
facebook.com/ccsdconnects
Students are the Heart of Our Work

On Thu, May 21, 2026 at 6:47 AM Pamela McKinney <pamela_mckinney@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

Trustees:

With the 2026-27 Board meeting calendar unanimously approved on Monday, and in alignment with the Superintendent Evaluation Instrument and Evaluation Process unanimously approved by the Board last year, please reserve the following October 2026 dates.

This year's Superintendent Evaluation will review the even-numbered indicators, as agreed upon by the Superintendent and the Board.

October 2 or October 5

Collect Superintendent Evaluation materials from 75 Calhoun or request delivery from Ms. Bowles.

October 8

State of the Schools, Charleston Music Hall, 10:00 AM-noon

October 12

Superintendent Huggins available for evaluation questions, 4:00-5:00 PM prior to COW.

October 14

Evaluations due to 75 Calhoun by 4:30 PM

October 15

Evaluation scores tabulated by the same team: Tempel, McKinney, Roberts, Gilmore, and Thompson.

October 19

Special Called Meeting at 5:15 PM, or earlier if preferred

In Executive Session, trustees will receive evaluation results first, and then, the Superintendent will join to receive and discuss evaluation results with trustees as a *body*.

October 26

Board of Trustees meeting and public release of results.

Additional procedure reminders and details will be shared later. The purpose of this email is to place these dates on your calendar.

Please DO NOT RESPOND ALL to this email. We are happy to answer any individual emails or phone calls.

Enjoy graduations,
Pam and Carol

The SCOIG notes that Trustee Roberson is SCSBA Board of Directors for: “*Region 2: Charleston.*”¹⁹ Trustee Roberson’s collateral duty as the Region 2 SCSBA director was funded by District appropriations. This duty to supervise the superintendent was confirmed by longstanding SCSBA guidance and local board policy.²⁰ Trustee Roberson’s written refusal to participate in the District Board’s formal superintendent evaluation process represented a direct abdication of a core statutory duty.

All of the above factors embodied “*fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, misconduct, [and] violations of state or federal law*” per [S.C. Code § 1-6-20\(B\)](#). Accordingly, this provides independent grounds for removal of Trustee Roberson by the Governor under [S.C. Code § 59-19-60](#).

VIII. Way Forward

The SCOIG team observed years of archived District Board meeting videos and attended several Board meetings in person during this investigation. All of which demonstrated countless hours spent on bickering amongst Board members attempting to engage in hyper technical application of Robert’s Rules of Order and arguing about whether Board action(s) were legally sufficient despite perceived subjective defects of parliamentary “order.” While Robert’s Rules of Order may be a helpful guide for conducting orderly meetings, it has no independent legal effect or binding consequences that would invalidate the actions of a majority of duly elected quorum of school board members lawfully operating in open session under applicable state law.

Picayune, intra-Board squabbling accomplishes nothing but greatly distracts from the District’s highest priority – student achievement and preparing the future leaders of our communities. This was no more evident than the dispute over an individual’s failed nomination for the District’s foundation board that caused the District’s expenditure of financial resources in legal representation in court based on a majority Board decision.

Even more important is the District should not be viewed by businesses, non-profit organizations or entrepreneurs as the “pot of gold at the end of the rainbow.” It is disturbing when the District’s procurement process is manipulated to benefit a few self-interests instead of benefiting the District’s goals and its students. The fact that a federal grand jury identified the unlawful disclosure of executive session material by a District Board member to an outside entity regarding a procurement matter underscores the reason that Governor McMaster requested an investigation of the District’s Board.

A Board that is unified, focused on academic achievement and supportive of the superintendent can have its greatest impact on the future success of its students. To do anything else is a disservice to the students, parents and taxpayers of the District.

The SCOIG extends its appreciation to District superintendent Anita Huggins, Board chair Pamela McKinney, District staff, and Board members for their cooperation and intentionality of seeking solutions to the issues identified by the SCOIG. The SCOIG also extends its appreciation to current and former teachers and administrators, and to the parents and constituents in the District for the candor, courage and valuable input provided to the SCOIG during this investigation.

¹⁹ <https://scsba.org/about-us/board-of-directors/>

²⁰ <https://scsba.org/general/roles-and-responsibilities-of-a-school-board-member.pdf>, <https://scsba.org/board-member-roles-and-responsibilities/2025/02/.pdf>, [https://scsba.org/board & superintendent relations-law policy & contract/2023/02/.pdf](https://scsba.org/board-&superintendent-relations-law-policy-&contract/2023/02/.pdf).

October 2026 Addendum - Supplemental Documents

Considering certain areas of discussion within the public sphere following the SCOIG’s original 8/27/2026 publication of:

- “*Investigation of the Charleston County School District Board of Trustees for Potential Misconduct, Disclosure of Confidential Information, and Adverse Fiscal Impacts*” and
- “*Appendix – A Circle of Life Procurement Analysis*”

the SCOIG, per S.C. Code § 1-6-50(C), has determined to supplement the above report(s) with the following files and information.²¹

A. Attorney Client Privilege – Limited Waiver by the District.

The District informed the SCOIG that while the original unauthorized disclosures of attorney-client privileged communications by an individual Board member constituted breaches of fiduciary duty and District policy, and the confidentiality of those specific materials was compromised, the District itself never waived the privilege. The damage from those individual acts has occurred. What remains is the need for public accountability regarding the actual content and context of the communications identified in the SCOIG report.

Accordingly, on 10/12/2026, the District superintendent, with authority on behalf of the District, authorized a limited waiver of attorney-client privilege (ACP) confined exclusively to the relevant portions of those specified communications. The waiver is solely to permit the SCOIG to unredact its 8/27/2026 report and/or supplement it with that content so the public may evaluate the materials directly. This limited authorization does not constitute a subject-matter waiver, does not ratify the prior improper disclosures, and fully reserves the privilege as to all other matters, including in the pending proceeding under S.C. Code § 59-19-60.

The District’s ACP waiver is found on the following page:

²¹ This investigation remains ongoing, *see generally*, South Carolina Appropriations Act [Proviso 117.177](#). Additionally, because the S.C. § 59-19-60 “notice” and “opportunity to be heard” provisions have been satisfied – the SCOIG has updated the original reports with unredacted versions.



Charleston County School District
Office of the Superintendent
 75 Calhoun St.,
 Charleston, SC 29401
 (843) 937-6571

October 12, 2026

Limited Waiver of Attorney-Client Privilege

I, Anita W. Huggins, Superintendent of the Charleston County School District (the "District"), acting with authority on behalf of the District as the holder of the attorney-client privilege hereby authorizes a limited waiver of the attorney-client privilege as follows.

The privilege applicable to communications between the District (including the Board of Trustees and its authorized representatives) and its counsel is held by the District. Prior disclosures of confidential and/or attorney-client privileged Board information by an individual Board member, as detailed in the South Carolina Office of the State Inspector General ("SCOIG") report dated August 27, 2026 (Case #2026-0007-I), were unauthorized, made without the consent of the District, and violated Board policies and fiduciary duties. Those acts did not constitute a waiver of the privilege by the District.

The confidentiality of the specific communications identified in that report as having been the subject of the unauthorized disclosures (the "Specified Communications," consisting of the email forwards to news media outlets and a District vendor email address between February 2023 and December 2025) has already been compromised by those unauthorized acts. The original breaches of fiduciary duty and the resulting damage have occurred.

In the interest of public accountability, and solely to enable the public to evaluate the actual content and context of the Specified Communications in order to prevent misrepresentation of those materials, I hereby authorize a limited waiver of the attorney-client privilege with respect to the content of the Specified Communications (limited to the portions of those emails that were forwarded and that form the basis of the SCOIG's findings regarding unauthorized disclosure).

This limited waiver is made for the sole purpose of permitting the SCOIG to unredact its August 27, 2026 report and/or to supplement that report that includes the relevant content of the Specified Communications identified in Tables 1 and 2 on pages 9-10 of the SCOIG report.

This limited waiver does not authorize disclosure of any other privileged communications, does not constitute a subject-matter waiver or general waiver, and does not ratify, approve, or condone the prior unauthorized disclosures by the individual Board member.

The District fully reserves the attorney-client privilege as to all other communications and materials, past or future. Nothing in this limited waiver is intended to, or shall, prejudice the District's rights or position in the pending removal proceeding under S.C. Code § 59-19-60 or in any other matter. The waiver is confined to the public-accountability purpose stated above.

The District requests that any unredacted or supplemental report clearly identify the materials as released pursuant to this limited waiver for public-accountability purposes only.

This authorization is effective immediately for the limited purpose described.

Sincerely, -

Anita W. Huggins
 Superintendent



Charleston County
SCHOOL DISTRICT

Anita W. Huggins
 Superintendent of Schools

B. “Return to sender unread.”

Pasted below is an email from Trustee Roberson rejecting Certified US Mail from the District, as well as responding to a 12/10/2025 letter from the Board with the following rejection: *“Return to sender unread.”*

**TRUDIE BOWLES** <trudie_bowles@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Certified letter returned to Superintendent's Office
3 messages

Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us> Tue, Dec 16, 2025 at 2:20 PM
To: **TRUDIE BOWLES** <trudie_bowles@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Hi Trudie,
I wanted to let you know that I **refused a certified return-receipt letter from the Superintendent's Office** today and did not accept delivery. I was not expecting any correspondence of this nature, nor was I notified in advance. As a result, the letter will be returned to the sender. Given the ongoing issues and in the spirit of transparency, I felt it was important to document this action and make you aware in case it becomes relevant going forward.

R/
Darlene Dunmeyer Roberson, M.Ed
Board of Trustees-District 8
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401
Board Cell: (843) 997-8390
email: darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us
www.ccsdschools.com
twitter.com/ccsdcconnects
facebook.com/ccsdcconnects
Students are the Heart of Our Work

TRUDIE BOWLES <trudie_bowles@charlestoncountyschools.gov> Tue, Dec 16, 2025 at 3:06 PM
Reply-To: trudie_bowles@charlestoncountyschools.gov
To: Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Cc: Pamela McKinney <pamela_mckinney@charlestoncountyschools.gov>, ANITA HUGGINS <anita_huggins@charlestoncountyschools.gov>, "Johnson, Wilbur" <wjohnson@yrcfaw.com>**TRUDIE BOWLES**
OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR
Office of the Superintendent
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401
(843) 937-6318 | charlestoncountyschools.gov

[Quoted text hidden]

 **Letter from Board Chair_121025 (2).pdf**
530K**Darlene Roberson** <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us> Tue, Dec 16, 2025 at 3:48 PM
To: trudie_bowles@charlestoncountyschools.gov
Cc: Pamela McKinney <pamela_mckinney@charlestoncountyschools.gov>, ANITA HUGGINS <anita_huggins@charlestoncountyschools.gov>, "Johnson, Wilbur" <wjohnson@yrcfaw.com>

[Quoted text hidden]

The contents of the letter the Board chair was attempting to convey to Trustee Roberson is pasted below.



Charleston County School District
Board of Trustees
 75 Calhoun St.,
 Charleston, SC 29401
 (843) 937-6571

Board of Trustees

Ms. Pam McKinney, Chair
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Ms. Charlotte Bailey, Vice Chair
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Mr. Keith Grybowski
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Mr. Kevin Hollinshead
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Ms. Carolina Jewett
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Ms. Michele Leber
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

**Ms. Darlene Dunmeyer-
Roberson**
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Dr. Carol Tempel
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

Ms. Leah Whatley
 75 Calhoun Street
 Charleston, SC 29401

To: CCSD Board Trustee Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson

From: CCSD Board Chair Pamela McKinney

Date: December 10, 2025

Subject: Notice of Policy and Ethics Violations; Corrective Conduct

Trustee Dunmeyer-Roberson:

This letter follows up on our Monday telephone conversation and provides additional detail. In consideration of you and Board processes, included in this letter are corrective measures that, hopefully, will help avoid any further action.

Pursuant to Policy BCC, this letter serves as formal notice that your recent actions conflict with CCSD Board policies and the ethical standards adopted by the Board and the South Carolina School Boards Association (SCSBA). Specifically, your emails starting December 5, 2025 - (1) the "CFO Complaint" and (2) your subsequent message requesting an outside investigation, surrogate counsel, and raising safety concerns - did not follow established Board procedures. You copied a media outlet on these communications, which elevated an internal matter into a public one. Regardless of the merits of your allegations, failing to follow policy disrupts District operations and must cease.

This memo is not intended to address your viewpoints or votes. It addresses breaches of trustee responsibilities, decorum, confidentiality, and required process.

1. Board Authority Is Collective, Not Individual

CCSD policy states that "all powers of the board lie in its action as a body" and that individual board members "have no authority over personnel or school affairs, nor may they bind the district in any way."

Your emails demand specific District actions (retaining an investigator, appointing "surrogate board counsel," treating your assertions as a formal safety investigation, and confirming outcomes by a deadline). A trustee does not have authority to require these actions unilaterally. Any such



Charleston County
SCHOOL DISTRICT

requests must be submitted through the Superintendent consistent with policy.

Going forward direction should not happen with staff, counsel, or District processes through individual instructions or public ultimatums.

2. Breach of Ethical Decorum and Civil Conduct

Board Policy BCA requires trustees to act with “ethical, civil, businesslike, and lawful conduct” and to maintain appropriate decorum.

Your December 5 complaint uses accusatory and disparaging language about District staff and Board processes, including allegations of bad faith, racial targeting by named employees, improper executive-session procedure, and compromised deliberations. You also copied external parties, including the South Carolina Ethics Commission and media, while making allegations about employees and trustees.

SCSBA ethics require trustees to work with colleagues in a courteous manner, support open exchange during Board processes, and avoid personal attacks or threats. Concerns must be communicated professionally, without inflammatory rhetoric, and through established Board processes before external dissemination.

3. Improper Disclosure of Executive-Session Matters

Your complaint references alleged conduct and discussions within the executive session and indicates an intent to disclose additional executive-session content publicly. Trustees are required to preserve the confidentiality of executive-session discussions and not use that information in public disputes.

You should cease any further written or verbal disclosure, direct or implied, of executive-session discussions.

4. Improper Handling of Personnel Complaints

Your emails seek discipline-related outcomes for a senior staff member and request separate counsel for an individual trustee personnel dispute. CCSD policy reserves personnel supervision and investigation to the Superintendent and established administrative processes.

If you have a personnel complaint, it must be submitted through the Superintendent-led process.

5. Conduct Inconsistent With Trustee Duties

Policy BCA requires trustees to represent the entire District and place student interests first.

Trustee communications must be grounded in District governance and student interest, not personal disputes or individualized demands.

Because these issues occurred in formal written communications to counsel, staff, and external parties, further violations may result in Board action per Policy BCC.

Effective immediately:



- Refrain from external dissemination of allegations involving staff, trustees, or executive-session matters outside established processes.
- Route personnel complaints through the Superintendent, not through individual directives.
- Maintain civil, professional communication consistent with Policy BCA and SCSBA ethics.
- Respect the Board's unity of governance, acknowledging that only the Board as a whole directs District action.

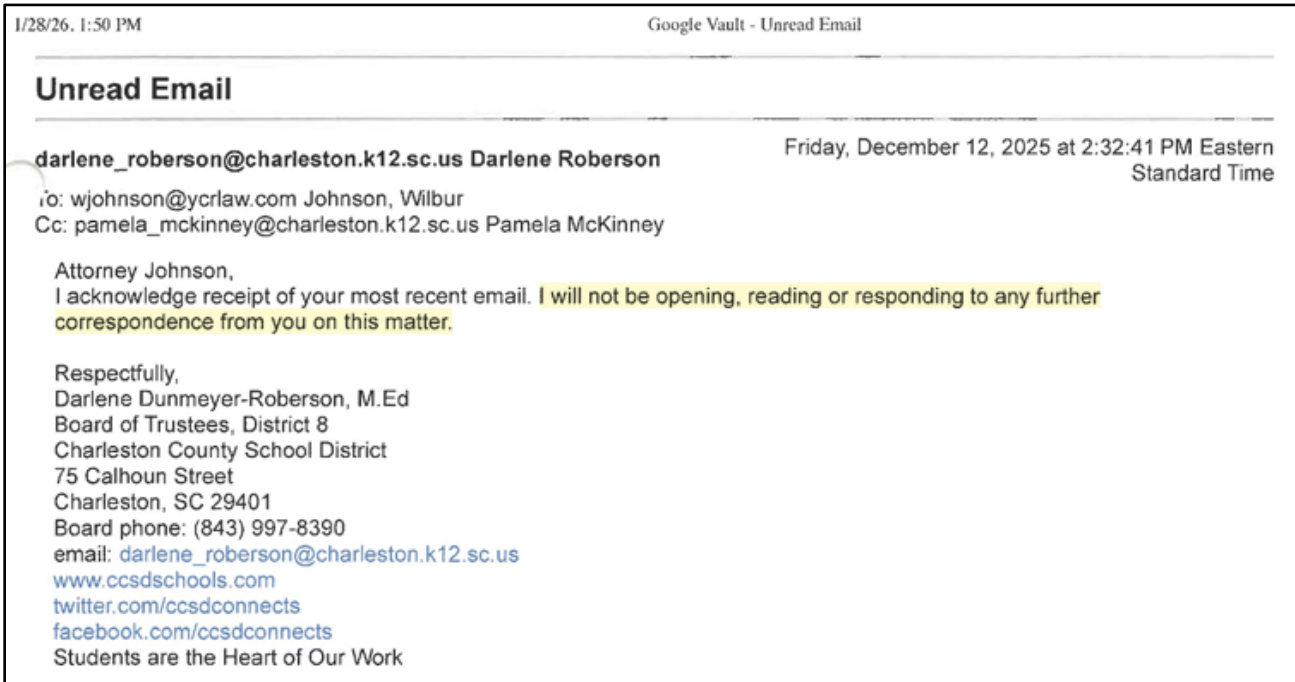
Disagreement is part of governance, but it must occur within policy, with professionalism, and with respect for Board and District operations.

CC: Wilbur Johnson, Esq, Interim General Counsel
Charlotte Bailey, Vice Chair



C. “I will not be opening, reading or responding to any further correspondence from you on this matter.”

Pasted below is an email dated “*Friday, December 12, 2025 at 2:32:41 PM*” when Trustee Roberson sought to shutdown any further communications from District counsel “*on this matter.*” The context of these emails reflected an ongoing disagreement between Trustee Roberson and District counsel as it related to a human resources matter with the then District CFO.



D. "I fundamentally disagree with your conclusions"

Pasted below is an email from Trustee Roberson dated "Friday, December 12, 2025 8:00 AM" rejecting any advice from District counsel who cautioned Trustee Roberson that "[i]t can only be repeated that the disclosure of matters discussed in an executive session held by a public body is, at best, unwise."

1/28/26, 1:50 PM

Google Vault - ACP-- Allegation re: Executive Session

Wilbur E. Johnson, Partner

Clement Rivers, LLP

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 993, Charleston, SC 29402-0993

Street Address: 25 Calhoun Street, Suite 400, Charleston, SC 29401

Direct Dial: 843.724.6659

Direct Fax: 843.579.1332

wjohnson@ycrlaw.com

From: Johnson, Wilbur
Sent: Friday, December 12, 2025 12:29 PM
To: 'Darlene Roberson' <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Cc: Pamela McKinney <pamela_mckinney@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Subject: RE: ACP-- Allegation re: Executive Session

Dear Trustee Roberson: Respectfully, I am confident that the advices that I have provided to you, and by extension, to the Board, are consistent with applicable legal and ethical principles. Perhaps, the fourth sentence of your memo below largely reflects our fundamental disagreement. To reiterate, the General Counsel's advices are not given only to you, or to any other member of the Board, "as a Trustee". The advices are given to the entire School District. You posit that to be a "structural conflict". I suggest to you that that concept is embedded in the provisions of the American Bar Association's Model Rule 1.13. Briefly, on another issue, it defies logic to suggest that the relevant provisions of BDG requires that the GC be considered "conflicted out" in a circumstance where a single Trustee has a dispute with the Superintendent. Any assemblage of Board members less than a majority does not, and cannot, speak for "the board". The language in GDC is plain; the dispute, whether it concerns a contract issue or any other matter, must be between "the board" and the superintendent in order for a conflict to exist. Notably, even where there is a dispute between "the board and the superintendent", GDC authorizes the superintendent to hire counsel "for the board". There is no authorization for the hiring of counsel for an individual board member.

Finally, I stand ready to provide advice and counsel to you, in your capacity as a Trustee, at any time you may choose to call upon me.

Thank you. Wilbur.

Wilbur E. Johnson, Partner

Clement Rivers, LLP

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 993, Charleston, SC 29402-0993

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wjohnson@ycrlaw.com

<https://ediscovery.google.com/discovery/DisplayMessage?m=4446b736-c986-4cb8-952d-54b304d31378&at=ACD7onqRWORUomaRQIVRIVIFC4JjJk6O1J20...> -49/55

From: Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Sent: Friday, December 12, 2025 8:00 AM
To: Johnson, Wilbur <wjohanson@ycrlaw.com>
Cc: Pamela McKinney <pamela_mckinney@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Subject: Re: ACP-- Allegation re: Executive Session

Attorney Johnson,

I have reviewed your response carefully. I fundamentally disagree with your conclusions, your framing of the issues, and your continued minimization of the conflicts and risks presented. Your response only reinforces my concerns and confirms that I no longer have confidence in your ability to provide conflict-free, impartial legal advice to me as a Trustee.

First, your position that you are not conflicted because you "represent the District" rather than individuals is precisely the problem. In this matter:

The Superintendent is named in my complaint. The CFO, her direct report, is the subject of that complaint.

District legal resources have been repeatedly invoked to defend the Superintendent's position. Under these circumstances, it is not credible to suggest that you can simultaneously provide neutral advice to a Trustee raising allegations against that same chain of authority. Your explanation reflects a structural conflict, not its absence.

Second, your restrictive interpretation of Policy BDG, limiting conflict only to disputes involving a Board majority or contract matters, is unsupported by the plain purpose of the policy, which is to prevent divided loyalties and preserve Board integrity. A dispute need not be reduced to a formal contract action to trigger conflict; governance, retaliation, and misuse of authority are equally serious. Your reading effectively denies individual Trustees any meaningful protection unless they first secure a majority vote, which is inconsistent with principles of fiduciary oversight and whistleblower protections.

Third, your suggestion that internal staff investigations are presumptively adequate, ignores the central issue raised repeatedly: credibility and appearance of bias. When leadership and its direct reports are implicated, internal review, no matter how well intentioned, does not satisfy public trust, nor does it protect the District from exposure. An independent external investigation is not about legal obligation alone; it is about good governance, risk management, and integrity.

Fourth, your continued dismissal of the executive-session concerns as merely "unwise" disclosures again sidesteps the issue. The concern raised was not casual disclosure, but selective narrative-setting, intimidation, and preemptive legal posturing directed at a dissenting Trustee. That distinction matters, and your response fails to grapple with it.

I must state plainly that I am deeply disappointed in your performance in this matter, both as General Counsel to this governing body and as an African American attorney entrusted with upholding fairness, equity, and ethical governance. At

a moment when an elected African American woman Trustee has raised concerns about retaliation, targeting, and safety, your responses have consistently favored institutional protection over independent scrutiny.

Accordingly, I am formally closing out further discussion with you on this matter and on future matters that would require individual Trustee advice or protection. Based on your responses, I lack confidence in your ability to provide conflict-free counsel where District leadership is implicated.

Nothing in this communication should be construed as a waiver of any rights, remedies, or future actions available to me. I will preserve the record accordingly and pursue appropriate avenues consistent with my duties as an elected official.

This correspondence will stand as my final communication to you on this issue.

Respectfully,

Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson, M.Ed
Board of Trustees, District 8
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401
Board phone: (843) 997-8390
email: darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us
www.ccsdschools.com
twitter.com/ccsdconnects
facebook.com/ccsdconnects
Students are the Heart of Our Work

On Wed, Dec 10, 2025 at 7:39 PM Johnson, Wilbur <wjohnson@yclaw.com> wrote:

ATTORNEY-CLIENT COMMUNICATION

Dear Trustee Roberson: I apologize that I am just now able to respond to your message, after having returned to my office earlier this evening from a very lengthy meeting. In any event, in my December 8, 11:38 am email, I provided responses to your questions/requests. For the purpose of additional clarification, I explained that, as General Counsel (GC), I do not conclude that I was/am legally conflicted out of providing advice in connection with the matter you raise. Generally, in the GC role, I do not represent or provide advice exclusively to, or in defense of, any CCSD official, individual or office. My advice is provided to the School District, whether that advice is, at any point, given directly to a Trustee, the Superintendent or other District employee. While it may be that my advice is consistent with, or supportive of, the actions or opinions of one District official/employee as opposed to the actions/opinions of another, the advice, ultimately, is given to the School District. Ordinarily, the District does not, and is not obliged to, hire counsel to advise an individual board member, except in circumstances where the board member is the subject of litigation (or the threat of litigation) arising out of some act taken by the board member (or which the board member failed to take) in the course of the board member's official duties. Even then, the counsel hired very likely has an obligation to keep the District informed of matters pertinent to the advices provided to the individual board member. In #1 of your memorandum sent to me at 10:27 am this morning, you reference "Board policy". My assumption is that you are referencing the language in Policy BDG, which states, in pertinent part, that "in the event of a dispute between the board and superintendent, the General Counsel may not represent the interests of either and, in such event, the superintendent shall authorize the hiring of outside counsel to represent the board". I construe this language to indicate that the "dispute" must be between the board, as an entity, and the superintendent, rather than a single board member, or, a group of board members that is less than the majority. This conclusion is based upon the fact that the board cannot officially take an action/position, unless the action/position is agreed to by the majority. In my judgment, this language most likely has to do with contract disputes between the board and the superintendent. It seems to me that a contract-related matter would be the most likely circumstance leading to a dispute between the board, as an entity, and

the superintendent. In any case, if the language was intended to cover a dispute between the superintendent and a single board member, or a group of board members comprising less than the majority, the language could very easily have been written in that manner. Instead, the language very specifically refers to "the board", as an entity. I will be glad to confer with the Board on the issue of whether, under the circumstances, additional counsel should be engaged.

With respect to #2 in your memorandum, I conclude that the Board has the authority, under circumstances it deems appropriate, to authorize an "investigation" to be done by an "external party". My general opinion is that the circumstances concerning which the Board should consider such an authorization are fairly limited. In this instance, my understanding is that the "complaint" to be investigated has to do with a belief that the Superintendent and the CFO have engaged in some form of inappropriate conduct with respect to yourself, or, positions you have taken. I may not be aware of all of the facts underlying your complaint; however, based upon the information of which I am aware at this time, I do not consider that the Board is legally obligated to hire an "external investigator" in this instance. Any member of the School District staff who may be tasked with undertaking an "investigation" of the matter would generally enjoy legal protection, based upon statutory and common law, from any retaliatory conduct. Further, if the Board concluded that the results of any such investigation were improperly affected by any motive to "protect" or "shield" any party involved, the Board would be well within its authority to reject that investigation (or its results) and to take such further action as the Board may deem appropriate. However, to be clear, the Board can elect to engage an external investigator. As I stated in my December 8 memorandum, I will be glad to discuss this issue with the Board Chair, and/or any other members of the Board, so that a judgment on the issue can be made.

As to #3, the question you appear to raise is very "general". As indicated above, attorneys engaged by the School District are to provide their advice and counsel to and on behalf of the District, without particular regard to the District administrator or employee with whom the attorneys may be primarily communicating. An examination of specific facts and circumstances would be necessary in order to be able to respond in any reasonable manner to this question.

Finally, and as to the Dec. 9, 1:15 pm email circulated by the superintendent, which you reference below, I am not aware that the School Board held an "illegally convened" executive session during a Board meeting in November. And, of course, one of the purposes of an executive session is to permit a public body to discuss certain, specified matters outside of the "public portion" of a public meeting. It is accurate to state that the public revelation of matters discussed, in confidence, in executive session, could potentially expose the public body, and/or individual members of the public body, to the threat of litigation. The reference in the email to "CCSD employees" having been informed that a Trustee contacted the media regarding recent Executive Session information is too non-specific and vague to serve as a basis for further legal opinion or advice at this time. **It can only be repeated that the disclosure of matters discussed in an executive session held by a public body is, at best, unwise.**

I will be glad to discuss these matters further with you.

Thank you. Regards, Wilbur.

Wilbur E. Johnson, Partner

Clement Rivers, LLP

Mailing Address: P.O. Box 993, Charleston, SC 29402-0993

Street Address: 25 Calhoun Street, Suite 400, Charleston, SC 29401

Direct Dial: 843.724.6659

Direct Fax: 843.579.1332

wjohnson@ycrlaw.com

E. “I do not find it necessary to meet with the [CCSD]'s attorney.” “Return to sender, unread.”

Pursuant to S.C. Code § 1-6-50(A) and § 1-6-20(E), the District provided the SCOIG with substantial documentation consisting of email records of District Board members. While certain matters remain ongoing and/or were not part of the District’s limited waiver of ACP/confidentiality, the SCOIG identified a number of examples where Trustee Roberson refused to participate.

For example, an email dated “*Wed, Sep 3, 2025 at 10:01 AM*” when Trustee Roberson was advised of pending litigation against the District and rejected an attempt to meet with retained District counsel “to prepare for a potential deposition.” According to the email, Trustee Roberson was “*listed by the attorney for [Plaintiff] as a potential witness.*” Trustee Roberson stated: “*I do not find it necessary to meet with the defendant's attorney. If I am noticed for deposition, my testimony will be my testimony, and I will truthfully speak to any information I have received outside of executive session.*” ... “*As an independent elected official, I must be free to represent my constituents without undue pressure, intimidation, or restrictions stemming from litigation to which I am not a party. Protecting the integrity of this role is essential, not only for me personally but for the Board and community I serve.*”

Another example was an email dated “*Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 4:58:4 7 PM*” when Trustee Roberson rejected multiple attempts to participate in discussions from the Superintendent concerning “*attorney-client privileged supplemental correspondence prepared in consideration of information provided to me during Executive Session.*” Trustee Roberson replied with “*Return to sender, unread.*” on “*Thursday, November 13, 2025 at 4:58:4 7 PM*” and did so again when another attempt was made by the District to electronically convey the information on “*Wed, Nov 12, 2025 at 5:42 PM*”: “*Return to sender, unread.*”

F. “Receiving a chastising email from you regarding my availability and my response to a vendor is unacceptable. Please be mindful of your approach when addressing me.”

Pasted below is an email conversation dated on or about “*Tue, Nov 7, 2023 at 6:42 PM*” when a prospective vendor attempted to engage CCSD staff “*by way of introduction of Mrs. Darlene Roberson.*”

Fwd: Congratulations and a brief introduction

darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us Darlene Roberson

Friday, November 10, 2023 at 8:19:15 AM Eastern
Standard Time

roberson757@gmail.com

Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson, M.Ed
Board of Trustees, District 8
Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401
Board phone: (843) 997-8390
email: darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us
www.ccsdschools.com
twitter.com/ccsdconnects
facebook.com/ccsdconnects
Students are the Heart of Our Work

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Anita Huggins <anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Date: Thu, Nov 9, 2023 at 11:16 AM
Subject: Re: Congratulations and a brief introduction
To: Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Ms. Roberson,

Thanks for the follow-up.

I regret to learn that you found my email "chastising;" please, please know that it surely was not intended to be such. While I am troubled that I have been unable to connect with you on D9 and D23 matters, and I never noted in my email that your response to a "vendor [was] unacceptable," I don't see it as my role to "chastise" anyone, certainly not a Board member; such is simply not who I am as a woman or my leadership style. As you see below, I thought this matter was resolved at 5:23 AM yesterday morning when I responded to Mr. Gomez and connected him with Mr. Borowy. However, because so much in tone/intent is often lost in email, I tried to reach you via cell after discussing the matter myself via phone with Mr. Borowy.

As I and other Chief officers agree, regularly meeting with vendors for whom we have not identified a need for services and/or have sought solicitation is simply not standard practice. The email was intended to ensure you were aware of such. And, as the SC School Board Association cautions Board members about their involvement with vendors/the procurement process, we see it as our role internally to help shield Board members from unnecessary questioning, scrutiny, and/or criticism. So that you're aware, I am now the fourth superintendent with whom (or with whom members of the administration) Mr. Gomez has engaged about services via either a Board or community member.

I genuinely regret that we seem to have a fractured relationship and that you believe it necessary to warn me to "be mindful of [my] approach when addressing [you]." Like you, I have done everything I can to support the students and staff of this District. I pledge to continue doing so alongside you and other Trustees. To date, I believe you and I share incredibly more common ground than not. I am hopeful, when you are ready, we can sit and talk.

Again, please accept my most sincere apologies and regrets.

Best,
Anita Huggins

On Wed, Nov 8, 2023 at 5:24 PM Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

Ms. Huggins,

I personally called Mr. Borowy to discuss my email response to the vendor and I thought our conversation went well. Receiving a chastising email from you regarding my availability and my response to a vendor is unacceptable. Please be mindful of your approach when addressing me.

(If you plan to share this email in Board Brief, please send the entire thread and not portions of it for complete transparency.)

R/
Darlene Dunmeyer Roberson, M.Ed

Board of Trustees-District 8

Charleston County School District
75 Calhoun Street
Charleston, SC 29401
Board Cell: (843) 997-8390
email: darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us
www.ccsdschools.com
twitter.com/ccsdconnects
facebook.com/ccsdconnects
Students are the Heart of Our Work

On Wed, Nov 8, 2023 at 2:58 PM Anita Huggins <anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

Thank you so very much, Ms. Roberson.

I tried to reach you via phone at @ 2:15 PM to discuss the below but was unsuccessful. If there is a better contact number at which I might connect with you, please advise, as all of my recent attempts to communicate with you via phone regarding District business have been unsuccessful.

While I would have rather discussed this matter with you verbally, please know that it is not "standard practice" to regularly meet with vendors from whom we have not identified a need for services/sought solicitation as we receive multiple requests nearly daily.

However, in this instance, as it seems there was an initial meeting with Dr. Gallien about food services in which Mr. Borowy was not involved, he and I will schedule some time for a follow-up with Mr. Gomez via TEAMS.

If we can provide additional support, please let us know.

Anita Huggins

On Wed, Nov 8, 2023 at 12:22 PM Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

Mr. Gomez,

Thanks for reaching out. I was copied on the response to your email. We have a temporary change in leadership at the District office.

As an inquiring vendor, I'm confident that Mr. Borowy will reach out to you to discuss your interest in doing business with CCSD or refer you to the proper department/person. It's standard practice. Again, it was great meeting you at the SCSBA conference. I'm glad you had the opportunity to connect with Dr. Gallien during his brief tenure with us. Blessings always.

R/

Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson, M.Ed
Board of Trustees, District 8
Charleston County School District
[75 Calhoun Street](http://75CalhounStreet.com)
Charleston, SC 29401
Board phone: (843) 997-8390
email: darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us
www.ccsdschools.com
twitter.com/ccsdconnects
facebook.com/ccsdconnects
Students are the Heart of Our Work

On Wed, Nov 8, 2023 at 11:53 AM Gomez, Ronaldo <Ronaldo.Gomez@sodexo.com> wrote:

Ms. Huggins,

Thank you for the prompt response. I look forward to speaking with or Jeff soon.

Kind regards,

Ron Gomez
Director of Business Development
Sodexo Schools (K-12)
415-760-4559

From: Anita Huggins <anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Sent: Wednesday, November 8, 2023 5:23 AM
To: Gomez, Ronaldo <Ronaldo.Gomez@sodexo.com>
Cc: Darlene Roberson <darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us>; JEFFREY BOROWY <jeffrey_borowy@charleston.k12.sc.us>; Kyla Brantley <kyla_brantley@charleston.k12.sc.us>
Subject: Re: Congratulations and a brief introduction

External sender

Check the sender and the content are safe before clicking links or open attachments.

Mr. Gomez,

Thanks for your email and your kind sentiments. It's my honor to serve the great students, educators, and communities of Charleston. I surely appreciate the connection via Ms. Roberson/Dr. Gallien.

We currently do not out-source our food service. However, I've looped in our COO, Jeff Borowy, who will be back in touch should we decide to pursue such moving forward.

Many thanks for your work and for connecting with us.

Anita

On Tue, Nov 7, 2023 at 6:42 PM Gomez, Ronaldo <Ronaldo.Gomez@sodexo.com> wrote:

Dear Ms. Huggins,

I trust this message finds you well. I extend my heartfelt congratulations on your appointment as the Interim Superintendent of Charleston County Schools. Your dedication to the education of our students is truly commendable, and I am confident that your leadership will bring about positive changes for students and residents of Charleston County.

In addition to extending my congratulations, I would like to introduce myself and share an exciting opportunity that could significantly enhance the child nutrition program throughout the district. I had the privilege (by way of introduction of Mrs. Darlene Roberson) of working with Dr. Gallien on exploring ways to collaborate with Charleston County Public Schools (CCPS) to improve the nutritional offerings for students. Currently, Sodexo partners with Dorchester 2, and our efforts there resulted in a remarkable achievement, taking them from a \$2 million deficit to a \$700,000 surplus within the first year. This transformation was achieved by diversifying menu options and introducing scratch-made entrees, thus addressing financial challenges and providing a healthier and more appealing dining experience for the students.

I would be honored to provide more comprehensive details on the initiatives discussed with Dr. Gallien and explore how we can adapt these successful strategies to benefit Charleston County Schools. I suggest scheduling a TEAMS call at your earliest convenience to facilitate this discussion. Please let me know your availability, and I will accommodate to your schedule accordingly.

Thank you for considering this opportunity to improve the child nutrition program in Charleston County Schools. I look forward to working together to make a lasting and positive impact on the students in our community.

Kind regards,

G. Exhibit B as presented neglected to include the full email thread including Trustee Roberson's reply: "Thank you so much!"

During the 9/28/2026 hearing, Trustee Roberson submitted an email chain as Exhibit B. Exhibit B was presented as an email dated "*Fri, Jun 16, 2023 at 8:35 AM*" with the subject line "*Re: Circle of Life Program Proposal (St. Johns High School).*" The discussion at the hearing regarding Exhibit B began on transcript page 133:

Page 133

1 at the -- I'm happy to share this with the
2 community -- it doesn't appear that she was even
3 cc'd on those emails.
4 MS. BOROUGHS: So how did you get them?
5 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Someone shared that
6 with me.
7 MS. BOROUGHS: Can I see it? I'm confused.
8 Make it an exhibit.
9 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Because I wasn't
10 involved in that whole process profit.
11 - - -
12 (RESPONDENT'S EXHIBIT B, Emails, was marked
13 for identification.)
14 - - -
15 MR. DAVIS: I want to know was she notified
16 of the award?
17 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: No. No.
18 MR. DAVIS: And if you were, why?
19 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: I wasn't.
20 MR. GARVIN: And the exhibit that we just
21 submitted, I just looked at it very quickly, the
22 email chain, she wasn't even included on the
23 email chain discussing Circle of Life. There
24 are other district personnel discussing it.
25 MR. LIMEHOUSE: To Darlene?

Page 134

1 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Someone shared it
2 with me.
3 MR. DAVIS: Where did you get this email?
4 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: An employee shared
5 it with me. A former employee.
6 MS. BOROUGHS: So these are emails that
7 take place in 2023. So you received emails --
8 did you receive these in 2023?
9 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: No.
10 MS. BOROUGHS: When did you receive them?
11 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Three weeks ago as
12 evidence.
13 MR. GARVIN: That didn't have anything to
14 do with the procurement process.
15 MR. LIMEHOUSE: And the handwritten
16 notations on here, are those yours?
17 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Let me see. What
18 is handwritten?
19 MS. BOROUGHS: There's one.
20 MR. LIMEHOUSE: Right there.
21 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: No.
22 MR. LIMEHOUSE: Whose notes are those?
23 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: I can't say. It
24 could be the person that shared it with me.
25 MR. LIMEHOUSE: Who is that?

Pursuant to S.C. Code § 1-6-50(A) and § 1-6-20(E), the District provided the SCOIG with substantial documentation consisting of email records of District Board members. The full email thread provided by the District (compared with Exhibit B) indicated that Trustee Roberson was included and that Trustee Roberson replied from her District email on "*Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 12:27:04 PM*", telling the Superintendent: "*Thank you so much!*"

1 MR. DAVIS: I was about to ask you the same
2 thing. Who shared?

3 MR. LIMEHOUSE: You can answer me or you
4 can answer him, either one.

5 MR. DAVIS: Who shared the email with you?

6 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Would it be
7 appropriate for me to circle the name -- do I
8 have to say it out publicly?

9 MR. LIMEHOUSE: I'm not opposed to --

10 MR. DAVIS: I'm not opposed.

11 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: Okay.

12 MR. LIMEHOUSE: We'll note it for the
13 record.

14 Madam Court Reporter, if you will note that
15 the name being circled by the witness is who she
16 states as provided the communication to her.

17 Thank you.

18 MS. BOROUGHS: So these emails are in 2023
19 and appear to include a budget where the
20 vendor -- it's going to be a vendor that's going
21 to be paid, not volunteer services. Were you
22 aware of that at all in 2023?

23 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: No. I believe
24 because of -- because this came out, they wanted
25 me to have this information as evidence. I was

1 not a part of any of this.

2 MR. DAVIS: Did Mr. White ever tell you he
3 got the award?

4 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: He may have. Gosh,
5 it's -- he may. I can't -- I can't recall.
6 It's been three years.

7 MR. DAVIS: Did he ever discuss getting the
8 award with you?

9 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: The details of the
10 award?

11 MR. DAVIS: I didn't ask about the details.
12 Did he ever discuss with you about getting the
13 award?

14 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: No. No.

15 MS. BOROUGHS: Did he specifically tell you
16 that it was volunteer services at the
17 introduction?

18 MS. DUNMEYER-ROBERSON: No. I cannot allow
19 you -- it's two different things. Circle of
20 Life and Mr. White getting this contract had
21 nothing to do with him going in to visit the
22 school because his cousin was killed and
23 providing services as an alumni. It's two
24 different things.

25 MS. BOROUGHS: So you're saying this email

Re: Circle of Life Program Proposal (St. Johns High School)

darlene_roberson@charleston.k12.sc.us Darlene Roberson

Wednesday, June 21, 2023 at 12:27:04 PM Eastern Daylight Time

anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us Anita Huggins

Thank you so much!

R/

On Wed, Jun 21, 2023 at 9:12 AM Anita Huggins <anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

....just keeping you in the loop. John is going to work with Mr. White and principals to determine how/if his work might be better utilized as part of D9 feeder.

anita

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Jermaine Joyner** <jermaine_joyner@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Date: Fri, Jun 16, 2023 at 1:13 PM

Subject: Re: Circle of Life Program Proposal (St. Johns High School)

To: John Cobb <johne_cobb@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Cc: Anita Huggins <anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us>, Sherry_eppelsheimer@charleston.k12.sc.us <sherry_eppelsheimer@charleston.k12.sc.us>

I've followed up with Mr. White about the proposal and had a honest conversation with him. Although he had a very well put together presentation and this would be a great program for our kids, his proposed cost for the program is too much. With his proposal, I could hire 2-3 full time employees and have them dedicated solely to the work he is proposing. In addition they would work directly under me and could assist with other tasks. As I explained to him, if the district had that type of money, I would rather it be allocated directly to the school. I was expecting his cost to be about a tenth of what he proposed.

On Fri, Jun 16, 2023 at 12:15 PM John Cobb <johne_cobb@charleston.k12.sc.us> wrote:

You are very welcome. We will reach out to you soon. Mr. Joyner is away at a leadership conference next week.

On Fri, Jun 16, 2023 at 9:47 AM Aaron White <aswhite2@coastal.edu> wrote:

Mrs. Huggins,

Thank you so much for your email! Looking forward to hearing from Mr. Joyner and Mr. Cobb regarding the proposal.

Appreciate your time and direction!

Regards,

Aaron S. White

From: Anita Huggins <anita_huggins@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Sent: Friday, June 16, 2023 8:36 AM

To: Aaron White <aswhite2@coastal.edu>

Cc: Jermaine Joyner <jermaine_joyner@charleston.k12.sc.us>; Eugene White <ewwhite@eastwest.com>; Sherry_eppelsheimer@charleston.k12.sc.us <Sherry_eppelsheimer@charleston.k12.sc.us>; COBB, JOHNE <johne_cobb@charleston.k12.sc.us>

Subject: Re: Circle of Life Program Proposal (St. Johns High School)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Mr. White,

Thank you, again, for this proposal; I hope you and your family are well. Thank you, too, for being in touch with me.

I believe Mr. Joyner intends to follow-up with you if he hasn't already had a chance to do so; it's been a busy time getting students graduated. In the interim, I've forwarded your proposal to Mr. John Cobb and asked that he connect with you about the services you offer.

Smiles,
Anita

H. “Aaron White, campaign manager for Darlene responding to your inquiry from her shared campaign inbox.”

Pasted below is an email dated “*Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 12:36:50 PM*” from the CCSD records. Mr. White’s association with Trustee Roberson was ongoing as he was serving as “*campaign manager for Darlene*” – all while he was engaged as a vendor for the District, specifically between the submissions of Circle of Life invoices #007 and #008 for alleged services rendered to the District. Remarkably, this email chain also reflected an email signature portion for sent emails from “*Darlene Roberson <roberson757@gmail.com>*” consistent with that of the CCSD vendor [“*Next Level Educational Services*”] and not a personal email address:

9/28/26, 11:29 PM Google Vault - Fwd: GOTV at Fields Farm

Fwd: GOTV at Fields Farm

dunmeyerforschoolboard@gmail.com Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson **Tuesday, September 10, 2024 at 12:36:50 PM**
To: carol_tempel@charleston.k12.sc.us Carol Tempel Eastern Daylight Time

Dunmeyer-Roberson Campaign
P O Box 1014
Hollywood, SC 29449
843.256.6433
dunmeyerforschoolboard@gmail.com
www.dunmeyerforschoolboard.com
"The Rural Solution"

----- Forwarded message -----
From: **Darlene Dunmeyer-Roberson** <dunmeyerforschoolboard@gmail.com>
Date: Tue, Aug 27, 2024, 6:53 PM
Subject: Re: GOTV at Fields Farm
To: melindalh@aol.com <melindalh@aol.com>

Good afternoon Melinda,

This is Aaron White, campaign manager for Darlene responding to your inquiry from her shared campaign inbox. Thank you for reaching out regarding the upcoming GOTV planned by Elaine and others at Fields Farms. Below may be some valuable information:

Some background on Michelle Faust other than what is on her website. Michelle has worked closely to advocate for Coalition for Kids and Charleston Shared Future which were both pro-privatization efforts in Charleston. She has not held any formal positions in Education other than School Improvement Council chair at Angel Oak while her child attended there (which she had conflicts with the principal and pulled the child out of the school) and at Mt. Zion on Johns Island. She has no degree, qualifications, etc. in education and just has volunteer work with the SIC. Prior to entering the race for School Board, a trusted source already shared with me that Michelle was considering entering the race after being approached by Moms For Liberty leader, Tara Wood to consider running against Darlene. This was told to my source directly by Michelle Faust. This was evidenced by a post by Tara Wood on the day Michelle filed which I've attached to this email. Michelle Leber, big Moms for Liberty supporter and wife of Matt Leber, has also shared her endorsement of Michelle Faust via social media which I've also attached. Michelle spearheaded the campaign to name the new Johns Island elementary school as "Johns Island Elementary School" and NOT "Esau and Janie Jenkins Elementary School" after two well deserving historical figures on the sea islands in the area of education. She recruited people to lobby the Board of Trustees to not name the school after these historic pioneers and colluded with others on the Naming Committee to do a recording that was shown at the School Board meeting where the vote would be taken so it would sway votes. With a Moms For Liberty backed School Board, they ultimately named the school Johns Island Elementary School even while a huge sector of the population on the Sea Islands disagreed. This is Elaine's grandfather. The indigenous people on the Islands went voiceless as a result of Michelle's actions on the Naming Committee and beyond. Darlene and the other 3 allies on the School Board attempted to stop this but without being the majority, Michelle Faust won ultimately.

Finally, D9 Education Committee is not a real thing. She has made up "organizations" that she's been a part of to make up for her lack of experience in Education. She works in the manufacturing industry.

Below are three questions I would say are a MUST but from my synopsis above, please feel free to draw any additional questions you think would be suitable. Please see below questions:

1. Recently emerging locally in the School Board elections is the group known as Moms for Liberty. The group has been named by the Southern Poverty Law Center as a far-right extremist group due to their rhetoric against DEI, LGBTQ individuals, and advocating banning books and curriculum that promote factual history on the context of race. Have you been supported by Moms for Liberty or members of this group for this Election? Do you support this group and their platform?

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9/28/26, 11:29 PM Google Vault - Fwd: GOTV at Fields Farm

2. Recently the CCSD Board of Trustees took up a vote on the naming of the new Johns Island elementary school, which was named Johns Island Elementary School. This did not come without heightened scrutiny as a significant portion of the community also advocated for the name of the school to be Esau and Janie Jenkins Elementary School. What is your stance on the naming of the new Johns Island elementary school? Do you believe the school should have been named Johns Island Elementary School as it stands or Esau and Janie Jenkins Elementary School?
3. Name specific formal education and training you've received, credentials, and qualifications that prepares you to be on the Board of Trustees?

Best,
Aaron White
Dunmeyer-Roberson Campaign

From: Darlene Roberson <roberson757@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 26, 2024 10:23:55 PM
To: dunmeyerforschoolboard@gmail.com <dunmeyerforschoolboard@gmail.com>
Subject: Fwd: GOTV at Fields Farm

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----- Forwarded message -----
From: **melindalh@aol.com** <melindalh@aol.com>
Date: Mon, Aug 26, 2024, 9:25 PM
Subject: GOTV at Fields Farm
To: Darlene Dunmeyer Roberson <roberson757@gmail.com>

Darlene,

I am working Relational Advocacy with a group on John's Island/Kiawah. They are working on The Four but are focused on support for you.

They will be at the October 5 GOTV-24 event at Fields Farm... and you and Michelle Faust are among the speakers. They are going to submit questions and would like to create questions that will allow you to contrast yourself to Michelle. Can you help me? Are there questions you'd like Michelle to answer? I am told the questions need to be submitted by 9/15.

Do you have any background on Michelle other than her website and FB?

Thanks Melinda

Attachments:
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APPENDIX A - CIRCLE OF LIFE PROCUREMENT ANALYSIS

[https://www.oig.sc.gov/sites/oig/files/Documents/Reports/2026/CCSD/2026-0007-I SCOIG CCSD Appendix-A Unredacted 20260827.pdf](https://www.oig.sc.gov/sites/oig/files/Documents/Reports/2026/CCSD/2026-0007-I%20SCOIG%20CCSD%20Appendix-A%20Unredacted%2020260827.pdf)