

IN THE MATTER OF
REQUEST FOR REMOVAL OF
LOCAL BOARD MEMBER
SHAYLA ADAMS-STAFFORD

BEFORE THE
MARYLAND
STATE BOARD
OF EDUCATION
Order No. OR24-15

ORDER

The State Board received a request from a group of individuals (the “Petitioners”) to remove Shayla Adams-Stafford as a member of the Prince George’s County Board of Education (“local board”) for misconduct. The Petitioners allege misconduct based upon Ms. Adams-Stafford’s submission for reimbursement to the local board for legal fees in the amount of \$36,111.92 she incurred in defense of an ethics complaint filed against her because of her service on the local board and in her official capacity as a board member including filing an action for injunctive relief in July of 2021 in the Circuit Court of Prince George’s County to enjoin the Prince George’s County Board of Education Ethics Advisory Panel (“EAP”) and the local board from taking action against her which she believed was unfounded. The Petitioners allege that the expenses submitted by Ms. Adams-Stafford were reviewed and approved by Judy Mickens-Murray, Chair of the local board on August 10, 2023.

Ultimately, on August 26, 2022, the Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (“OIGE”) issued an Investigative Report Summary (“OIGE Report”) regarding the investigation of the named members by the EAP including Ms. Adams-Stafford. The OIGE report found that the EAP investigation was unreliable, and that the EAP committed various violations throughout its investigation. The OIGE report found that the EAP failed to provide a complete and fact-based report, that information contained in the report was improperly referenced or factually inaccurate, and that the EAP failed to include in its final report exonerating statements made by witnesses. (OIGE Report at 15). On September 15, 2022, the local board voted to accept the OIGE report and rescind the vote taken on June 9, 2022 to remove the local board members including Ms. Adams-Stafford.

COMAR 13A.01.05.12(E)(4) provides that a legally sufficient request shall create a reasonable belief that the actions committed could constitute grounds for removal from office. COMAR 13A.01.05.12(E)(5) requires the State Board to dismiss a request that is not factually or legally sufficient, or otherwise fails to meet the requirements of the removal regulation.

Md. Code Ann., Educ. §4-104(c) provides:

- (c) (1) This subsection applies only in Prince George's County.
- (2) The county board shall retain counsel to defend a county board member who is involved in litigation because of the member's service and in the member's official capacity on the county board.

(3) The county board shall pay all counsel fees and reasonable and related expenses incurred for defending a member in litigation involving the member's service in the member's official capacity on the county board if it is determined during the course of litigation that the member was acting within the scope of the member's authority and without malice and gross negligence.

Assuming all the facts are true as alleged by the Petitioners, we find that the petition is deficient as the allegations are not factually or legally sufficient to support charges as required by COMAR 13A.01.05.12. The expenses identified by the Petitioners represent expenses Ms. Adams-Stafford incurred as part of her defense of an ethics complaint filed against her because of her service on the local board and in her official capacity as a board member and fall within the purview of legal fees the local board is required to reimburse under §4-104(c).¹

Therefore, it is this 23rd day of July 2024, by the Maryland State Board of Education, ORDERED, that the request to issue charges for removal of board members Shayla Adams-Stafford is dismissed.

MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Signatures of File:

Joshua L. Michael
President

Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang

Clarence C. Crawford

Abhram Gaddam (Student Member)

Susan J. Getty

Nick Greer

¹ Technically, the petition is also subject to dismissal under COMAR 13A.01.05.12A because the petition fails to identify that the Petitioners are residents of Prince George’s County. However, through a search on of the Maryland State Department of Assessments and Taxation website we were able to confirm at least one of the Petitioners is a resident of Prince George’s County. Any future petitions filed by the Petitioners should clearly identify if the Petitioners are residents of Prince George’s County.

Irma Johnson

Rachel McCusker

Joan Mele-McCarthy

Samir Paul

Abstained:
Monica Goldson, Vice-President