

Before the School Ethics Commission
Docket No.: C10-25
Final Decision
Summary Disposition

Anthony Ingrassia,
Complainant

v.

**Manuel Gonzalez, Mohamad Freij, Danielle Amedeo, Dorie Harvey,
Jennifer Agugliaro and Fatima Santos,
Watchung Borough Board of Education, Somerset County,
*Respondents***

I. Procedural History

The above-captioned matter arises from a Complaint that was filed with the School Ethics Commission (Commission) on February 4, 2025,¹ by Anthony Ingrassia (Complainant), alleging that Manuel Gonzalez (Respondent Gonzalez), Mohamad Freij (Respondent Freij), Danielle Amedeo (Respondent Amedeo), Dorie Harvey (Respondent Harvey), Jennifer Agugliaro (Respondent Agugliaro) and Fatima Santos (Respondent Santos) (collectively, Respondents), members of the Watchung Borough Board of Education (Board), violated the School Ethics Act (Act), *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-21 et seq.* More specifically, the Complaint avers that Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*, and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* of the Code of Ethics for School Board Members (Code). Respondents filed a Written Statement on April 1, 2025.

The parties were notified by correspondence dated September 16, 2025, that the above-captioned matter would be discussed by the Commission at its meeting on September 23, 2025, in order to make a determination regarding probable cause. Following its discussion on September 23, 2025, the Commission adopted a decision at its meeting on October 28, 2025, finding that there were sufficient facts and circumstances pled in the Complaint and in the Written Statement to lead a reasonable person to believe that *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* were violated as set forth in the Complaint, but insufficient facts and circumstances to lead a reasonable person to believe that *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(g)* was violated as alleged in the Complaint. Additionally, in accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-9.8(a)(1)(ii)*, the Commission voted to decide the above-captioned matter by summary decision and directed Respondents to file a statement setting forth the reasons (Statement of Reasons) they should not be found in violation of the Act. Respondents were also advised that if they dispute any of the facts determined by the Commission to be both material and undisputed, they should set forth the facts with which they disagree, and why they are material to the case. Finally, Respondents were further advised that

¹ On January 30, 2025, Complainant filed a deficient Complaint; however, on February 4, 2025, Complainant cured all defects and filed an Amended Complaint that was deemed compliant with the requirements detailed in *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.3*.

the Commission may then make a determination of a violation on a summary basis. Respondents filed a Statement of Reasons on November 17, 2025.

Thereafter, at its meeting on December 16, 2025, the Commission reviewed the record in this matter and, at its meeting on January 27, 2025, adopted a decision finding that all named Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*, and only Gonzalez violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*. Consequently, the Commission recommended a penalty of censure for all Respondents for violating the provisions of the Act.

II. Summary of the Pleadings

A. *The Complaint*

According to Complainant, at the special Board meeting on April 23, 2024, Respondents voted to approve a walk on resolution “authorizing the appointment of Porzio, Bromberg [and] Newman as Special Conflicts Counsel.” Then, at the regular meeting on April 25, 2024, Respondents voted to approve another walk on motion, “presented by Respondent Gonzalez, authorizing [Respondent Gonzalez] . . . to file a complaint with the [Commission] against Complainant,” and further authorizing the Special Conflicts Counsel to assist Respondents with filing the Complaint against a fellow Board member that was paid for using Board funds.

Complainant asserts that on August 5, 2024, Respondent Gonzalez filed an ethics complaint (docketed as C57-24²) alleging Complainant had violated the Act, and which listed an attorney from Porzio, Bromberg and Newman as counsel. Complainant further asserts that at the Board meeting on September 19, 2024, Respondent Gonzalez introduced another walk on motion authorizing himself retroactively to file an ethics complaint against Complainant. According to Complainant, Respondent Gonzalez abstained from the vote but “he introduce[d] the motion to the floor by announcing it with commentary, read it in its entirety/stressed the need for the Board to approve it, called for and participated in discussion with [another Board member] on the merits/rationale of the motion and requested a roll call to put the resolution before the Board for a vote.” Consequently, the motion passed.

Per Complainant, thereafter, at monthly meetings from April through December 2024, Respondents “repeatedly voted to approve payment to Porzio, Bromberg [and] Newman, who they had previously appointed as Counsel for Special Conflicts.”

With the above in mind, and in Count 1, Complainant asserts that Respondents “engaged in actions including, but not limited to: authorizing and/or directing Respondent Gonzalez to take action on behalf of the Board that the Board, as a public body, is not authorized to take, and repeatedly authorizing and/or directing the expenditure of District funds for the appointment of the Board’s Special Conflicts attorney to prosecute a matter(s) that the Board, as a public body, is not permitted to file” at the August 5, 2024, September 19, 2024, and October 24, 2024, meetings, in violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*.

In Count 2, Complainant contends Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* because they “took public Board action to initiate an adversarial position against one of their members, publicly discussing and pronouncing the merits of their actions against a fellow [B]oard member.”

² C57-24 was withdrawn by Complainant Gonzalez on March 25, 2025.

In Count 3, Complainant asserts Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* by “directing Board counsel to prepare, file and litigate an ethics complaint against a fellow Board member,” under the “pretext of taking official Board action to authorize [the Board President] as a sole Complainant on behalf of the [B]oard.” Complainant further asserts Respondents “used their official position to secure the privilege and advantage of free legal representation against their ideological rival . . .”

B. *Written Statement*

Respondents admit that on April 25, 2024, the Board passed a “‘walk in resolution’ . . . presented by Respondent Gonzalez, authorizing himself, Manuel Gonzalez, to file a complaint with the School Ethics Commission against Complainant.” Respondents admit that the Board “voted to authorize the ‘assistance of the Board’s special counsel’ with the complaint.” Respondents further admit that Respondent Gonzalez filed an ethics complaint against Complainant, which was prepared by “Special Conflicts Counsel” and paid for using school district funds that were approved and appropriated by Respondents. Respondents also admit that “during the Board’s meeting of September 19, 2024, Respondent Gonzalez introduced a walk-on motion for another resolution authorizing himself, retroactively, to file a complaint with the School Ethics Commission against Complainant Board Member Anthony W. Ingrassia, even though the complaint had already been filed on August 5, 2024.” Further, Respondents admit they voted to approve payment to Special Conflicts Counsel from April to December 2024. However, Respondents deny the characterizations of the allegations in the Complaint and maintain they did not violate the Act.

C. *Statement of Reasons*

Respondents initially argue that the Complaint should have been dismissed in its entirety because (1) it was time-barred; (2) the decision fails to consider that Respondent’s actions were lawful, and “having been rescinded, before any proceedings or decision of the Commission were held, are moot”; (3) even if the Complaint’s factual allegations were true, the Complaint does not present facts that would lead a reasonable person to believe that Respondents violated the Code; and (4) Respondents were not acting in their personal interest, but rather, with the desire to fulfill their oath of office and statutory obligations.

Respondents admit that “after hiring special legal counsel, and only after receiving the advice of that counsel . . . [they] voted to approve the filing of a school ethics complaint against Complainant.” Because ethics complaints may only be filed by a “person,” Respondents indicate “the Board voted to direct Respondent Gozalez as the named complainant.” Respondents contend that after the Commission’s decision in *Williams v. Cianciulli, et al.*, *Grober v. Cianciulli, et. al.*, and *I/M/O Pamela Stanley*, Berkeley Heights Board of Education, Union County (Consolidated), Docket Nos. C64-22, C77-22, and C92-22 (February 18, 2025), which established that Board members may not use Board counsel or Board resources in order to file an ethics complaint, the Board approved a resolution to withdraw the ethics complaint against Complainant.

Respondents contend that the Complaint is time-barred. According to Respondents, Complainant knows that the Complaint is out of time and then “goes to great lengths to contort his Complaint into one based on actions taken within the 180-day time period.” However, that is not the case here, as Complainant “was clearly on notice of the action taken by Respondents – to direct the Board President to file a complaint to use the Board’s special counsel to assist – in April.” Respondents note that “Complainant was on the Board and present during the April [B]oard meeting.” Therefore, per Respondents, “he was on notice no later than April 25 of the actions of these three Board members.”

Respondents argue the “pending matter filed by Respondents in August 2024 has been withdrawn and therefore the requested relief is moot.” Respondents claim with the withdrawal and “the Commission’s expectations clarified, there is no reason to rule in this matter, as there is no ‘immediate harm’ to Complainant or his reputation.” However, if the Commission does not decide the Complaint is moot, Respondents maintain this matter is distinguishable from the *Cianciulli* case. Respondents further maintain they “found themselves in the position where their obligation to protect their employees was weighed against their inability to make a determination that an individual member has violated the [A]ct, as this is the sole provenance of the Commission.” According to Respondents, “[g]iven the conflicting directions within the Act, and the desire for Respondents to seek the intervention of the Commission,” Respondents “took collective action” to file an ethics complaint.

As to the alleged violations, Respondents contend Complainant “fails to make any allegation of a personal promise made by any Respondent” to support a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*. Respondents state that the “public action ‘which had the potential to compromise the board’ are Respondents’ statements of dissatisfaction with Complainant’s actions” and statements alone do not support a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*. Respondents further contend, as to *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*, that Complainant “fails to allege any specific facts related to any personal gain on behalf of all Respondents, save for Respondent Gonzalez.” According to Respondents, “the only potential personal gain” perhaps was the time saved for Respondent Gonzalez by having Board counsel draft the complaint against Complainant. The remaining Respondents “were not parties to the underlying complaint.” Additionally, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, Respondents argue “the vote to approve an action by the Board, and the filing of the action itself, came outside the statute of limitations. All other actions alleged were just discussions or procedural votes to correct the record.”

Finally, Respondents assert if the Commission finds Respondents violated the Act, Respondents argue there is not a “legitimate reason to assess a penalty,” because Respondents were “attempting to fulfill their statutory responsibilities” and “clearly relied upon the advice of counsel where no published cases existed to guide their path.” A certification of Respondent Agugliaro indicates that the parties “sought and received specific advice” from Board counsel, and that “[n]o votes were taken to authorize [counsel] to prepare and file a complaint with the Commission prior to our receiving this advice.” Respondent Agugliaro certifies that “absent the Board paying [counsel’s] legal fees related to this matter, I would have never authorized the filing of that complaint against [Complainant] with only my personal funds . . . At no time did I believe I was receiving any economic benefit as I would not have spent my own funds to pursue the matter. Therefore, there would be no savings affecting my finances.”

III. Findings of Fact

Based on its thorough and independent review of the record, the Commission finds the following facts to be undisputed:

1. Complainant was a Board member from January 2021 through December 2024. *Complaint* at page 2; *Written Statement* at page 1.
2. At a special meeting of the Board on April 23, 2024, Respondents voted to approve a “walk-in resolution,” authorizing the appointment of Porzio, Bromberg and Newman as special conflicts counsel. *Complaint* at page 2; *Written Statement* at page 1.

3. At the regular meeting of the Board on April 25, 2024, Respondents voted to approve a “walk in resolution,” authorizing Respondent Gonzalez to file an ethics complaint with the Commission against Complainant, and authorized the “assistance of the Board’s special counsel” with the complaint. *Complaint* at page 2; *Written Statement* at page 1.
4. On August 5, 2024, special conflicts counsel filed the ethics complaint (docketed as C57-24) against Complainant with the Commission, with Respondent Gonzalez listed as Complainant. *Complaint* at page 3; *Written Statement* at page 2.
5. The complaint was prepared by special conflicts counsel and paid for using school district funds that were approved and appropriated by Respondents. *Complaint* at page 8; *Written Statement* at page 8.
6. At the Board meeting on September 19, 2024, Respondent Gonzalez introduced a “walk-on motion” for another resolution, authorizing himself, retroactively, to file a complaint with the Commission against Complainant. Respondent Gonzalez abstained from the vote, and the remaining Respondents voted to approve the motion. *Complaint* at page 4-6 and Exhibit E; *Written Statement* at page 4-6.
7. During regular monthly meetings of the Board from April through December 2024, Respondents repeatedly voted to approve payments to Porzio, Bromberg and Newman, who they had previously appointed as special conflicts counsel. *Complaint* at page 7; *Written Statement* at page 7.

IV. Analysis and Conclusions of Law

Alleged Untimeliness

In their Statement of Reasons, Respondents submit that the Complaint is time-barred. Respondents contend that Complainant “goes to great lengths to contort his Complaint into one based on actions taken within the 180-day time period,” but that Complainant was on notice of the action taken by Respondents when they voted in April 2024 “to direct the Board President to file a complaint [and] to use the Board’s special counsel to assist.” The Commission notes that this argument should have been raised in Respondents’ Written Statement and considered in a determination on probable cause, but it was not. Nevertheless, the Commission will address the timeliness of the Complaint here.

The Commission’s regulations provide a 180-day limitation period for filing a complaint. More specifically, N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.5(a) provides, in relevant part:

- (a) Complaints shall be filed within 180 days of notice of the events which form the basis of the alleged violation(s). A complainant shall be deemed to be notified of events that form the basis of the alleged violation(s) when the complainant knew of the events, or when such events were made public so that one using reasonable diligence would know or should have known (emphasis added).

In the present matter, the original deficient Complaint was filed on January 30, 2025, and 180 days prior to that date is August 3, 2024. The Commission finds that the filing of the Complaint at issue in this matter (C57-24) occurred on August 5, 2024, within the 180-day limitation period, and several votes to

approve payments to special conflicts counsel also occurred after that date. The Commission finds that the Board's vote to approve the filing of the ethics complaint and all votes to approve payments are inextricably linked, and the relevant date to consider all of the actions within time is the date the complaint was filed, as well as any dates to approve payments that occurred thereafter. Otherwise, the April 25, 2024, vote to authorize Respondent Gonzalez to file the ethics complaint and to authorize the assistance of special conflicts counsel to do so, without the *actual* filing of the ethics complaint or the assistance of Board counsel, would start the clock running before the actual substance of the current ethics complaint occurred. If the Commission agreed that April 25, 2024, was the relevant date for timeliness, then Board members would be able to circumvent the Act by voting to approve Board counsel to file an ethics complaint, waiting more than 180 days before filing it, and then claiming that the date of the vote is out of time. That outcome is not rational. Consequently, the Commission finds that all of the actions that form the basis of the Complaint – including the votes to authorize Respondent Gonzalez to file an ethics complaint and for special conflicts counsel to prepare and file it, the actual filing of the complaint, and the votes to approve the payment of special conflicts counsel – are within time.

Alleged Violations of the Act

Complainant alleges that Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*, and these provisions of the Code provide:

c. I will confine my board action to policy making, planning, and appraisal, and I will help to frame policies and plans only after the board has consulted those who will be affected by them.

e. I will recognize that authority rests with the board of education and will make no personal promises nor take any private action that may compromise the board.

f. I will refuse to surrender my independent judgment to special interest or partisan political groups or to use the schools for personal gain or for the gain of friends.

Before more fully addressing the alleged violations, the Commission finds it necessary to reiterate that ethics charges that are filed with the Commission are to be filed by individuals, not entities. Therefore, Board members who wish to file an ethics complaint may file on their own behalf, not on behalf of their Board. To that end, the Act is clear that only “[a] person” may file an ethics complaint with the Commission. *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-29(a)*. Accordingly, the Commission’s statute, which has remained unchanged, indicates that only individuals can file ethics charges, not boards of education. Moreover, and because anyone can file a complaint, it is not required, nor recommended, that a board of education deliberate and vote to have an individual member file a complaint, against anyone, especially a fellow board member. In addition, the Commission notes that legal counsel is not required to file an ethics complaint and many, if not most, ethics complaints are filed pro-se. Further, the Commission has previously found that board members who filed an ethics complaint as a board and/or who authorized the filing of an ethics complaint by a representative of the board, using board counsel or district funds, violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(b)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(f)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*, *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*. *Williams v. Cianciulli, et al.*, *Grober v. Cianciulli, et. al.*, and *I/M/O Pamela Stanley*, Berkeley Heights Board of Education, Union County (Consolidated), Docket Nos. C64-22, C77-22, and C92-22 (February 18, 2025).

Additionally, at the outset, the Commission seeks to address Respondents' argument that this matter is moot because they ultimately authorized the withdrawal of C57-24. Although the Commission acknowledges that the ethics complaint was withdrawn, it nevertheless finds that such withdrawal of C57-24 does not render the current ethics charges moot. The withdrawal of the ethics charges does not negate the actions taken by Respondents in filing that action, or in the subsequent votes to approve payments. It is those actions that are the subject of this ethics complaint, and those actions are not affected by the withdrawal of C57-24.

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.4(a)*, factual evidence of a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* shall include evidence that Respondents took board action to effectuate policies and plans without consulting those affected by such policies and plans, or took action that was unrelated to Respondents' duty to (i) develop the general rules and principles that guide the management of the school district or charter school; (ii) formulate the programs and methods to effectuate the goals of the school district or charter school; or (iii) ascertain the value or liability of a policy.

The Commission finds that Respondents' votes to authorize an individual to file an ethics complaint on behalf of the Board against a fellow Board member and Respondents' votes to permit special conflicts counsel and/or Board resources to file the complaint – when the Board as an entity is not permitted to file an ethics complaint – was action outside of their roles to make policies, plans and appraisals. Despite any arguments that such action was within their roles as they were fulfilling their statutory obligations, the Commission finds that directing Board counsel to conduct legal work on behalf of some Board members and against another Board member, when the Board is not authorized to make such a filing, is action unrelated to their duties as board members, and as such, is a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)*. The Commission reiterates that each Board member could have filed his/her own ethics complaint in their personal capacity.

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.4(a)*, factual evidence of a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)* shall include evidence that Respondents made personal promises or took action beyond the scope of their duties such that, by its nature, had the potential to compromise the board.

The Commission finds that Respondent Gonzalez took private action that may compromise the Board when he voted to approve the legal bills regarding the ethics complaint that he individually filed. Despite his direct conflict of interest, Respondent Gonzalez voted to authorize the payment of an attorney to represent him. Accordingly, Respondent Gonzalez acted outside the scope of his duties as a Board member. Such action – voting on legal bills despite a direct financial interest – would compromise the Board, as the Board is footing the bill for Respondent Gonzalez to file an ethics complaint. Therefore, the Commission finds that Respondent Gonzalez violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*.

However, the Commission finds that when Respondents Freij, Amedeo, Harvey, Agugliaro, and Santos voted to approve the legal bills, they did not act outside the scope of their duties because the ethics complaint was filed by Respondent Gonzalez. Although Respondents initially voted to authorize Respondent Gonzalez to file the ethics charges, ultimately, ethics complaints are filed by individuals, and therefore, the complaint was Respondent Gonzalez's and only his. As such, the Commission finds that Respondents Freij, Amedeo, Harvey, Agugliaro, and Santos did not violate *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*.

N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)

Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.4(a)*, factual evidence of a violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* shall include evidence that Respondents took action on behalf of, or at the request of, a special interest group or persons organized and voluntarily united in opinion and who adhere to a particular political party or cause; or evidence that Respondents used the schools in order to acquire some benefit for themselves, a member of their immediate family or a friend.

The Commission finds that Respondents used the schools to acquire a benefit when they used school resources, specifically the special conflicts counsel, to file an ethics complaint that they supported, and on their behalf (through Respondent Gonzalez). The Commission does not agree with Respondents' arguments that "the only potential personal gain" was perhaps time saved for Respondent Gonzalez. The use of free representation to draft and file an ethics complaint is much more of a benefit than time saved; it is an improper use of the Board and its resources to support their own goals. The Commission reiterates that legal representation is not necessary to file an ethics complaint, and therefore, Respondents could have simply filed an ethics complaint pro-se. As indicated in the certification of Respondent Agugliaro, if special conflicts counsel did not draft the ethics charges, Respondents would not have wanted to use their personal funds to pay for an attorney. As such, Respondents used school resources to draft and file ethics charges, which provided themselves (and their colleague Respondent Gonzalez) with the benefit of legal representation in a matter that they should have otherwise handled on their own, or paid for a private attorney using personal funds. Accordingly, the Commission finds Respondents acted in violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*.

V. Recommended Penalty

Having found that all named Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* and only Respondent Gonzalez violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*, the Commission is authorized to recommend to the Commissioner of Education (Commissioner) an appropriate penalty, which may range from reprimand to removal. *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-29(c)*.

In its review, the Commission finds that a censure is the most appropriate penalty. The Commission acknowledges Respondents' argument that they relied on the advice of counsel. While the advice of counsel is not a defense to whether an ethical violation occurred, the Commission recognizes that considering the factors set forth in *In re Zisa*, 385 N.J. Super. 188 (App. Div. 2006), the defense of advice of counsel may be considered a mitigating factor when imposing penalties for ethical violations. Presuming, as Respondents have argued, that they sought the advice of counsel prior to any action, and followed the advice of counsel, the Commission will consider this mitigating factor in its determination of a recommended penalty. Notwithstanding the mitigating factor, the Commission must also balance aggravating factors, specifically the public nature of Respondents' actions. Voting in public to authorize the filing of ethics charges against another Board member, and asking counsel to handle the matter, deserves a heightened and public remedy of censure, not the private remedy of reprimand. While individuals may file ethics charges against other Board members, Respondents voted at a *public* meeting to file ethics charges against another Board member (when ethics charges would otherwise be held confidential pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:28-6.6(g)*). If members of the public were at the Board meeting or have read the meeting minutes of the public meeting when the unauthorized votes took place, they deserve to learn the outcome that Respondents acted inappropriately and witness the public censure. Respondents made this an issue of public interest when they sought to make the alleged ethical violations of a fellow Board member known to the public by discussing it and voting on filing an ethics complaint at a public meeting; therefore, the

general public now has a right to be informed of the sanction publicly. As such, when balancing both the mitigating factor of advice of counsel with the aggravating circumstances surrounding the public nature of Respondents' violations, the Commission finds that a censure would be most appropriate in this matter. The Commission notes that it balanced similar circumstances, including the advice of counsel in *Williams v. Cianciulli, et al.*, *Grober v. Cianciulli, et. al.*, and *I/M/O Pamela Stanley*, Berkeley Heights Board of Education, Union County (Consolidated), Docket Nos. C64-22, C77-22, and C92-22 (February 18, 2025), and also found that a censure was warranted in that case.

IV. Decision

For the reasons set forth above, the Commission recommends that the Commissioner impose a penalty of **censure** for all named Respondents' violations of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* and only Respondent Gonzalez's violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*.

Pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-29(c)*, this decision shall be forwarded to the Commissioner for review of the Commission's recommended penalty. The parties may either: 1) file exceptions to the recommended sanction; 2) file an appeal of the Commission's finding of a violation; or 3) file both exceptions to the recommended sanction together with an appeal of the finding of a violation.

Parties taking exception to the recommended sanction of the Commission but *not disputing* the Commission's finding of a violation may file, **within thirteen (13) days** from the date the Commission's decision is forwarded to the Commissioner, written exceptions regarding the recommended penalty to the Commissioner. The forwarding date shall be the mailing date to the parties, as indicated below. Such exceptions must be forwarded to: Commissioner of Education, c/o Office of Controversies and Disputes, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, New Jersey 08625, marked "Attention: Comments on Ethics Commission Sanction," as well as to (ControversiesDisputesFilings@doe.nj.gov). A copy must also be sent to the Commission (school.ethics@doe.nj.gov) and all other parties.

Parties seeking to appeal the Commission's finding of a violation **must** file an appeal pursuant to the standards set forth at *N.J.A.C. 6A:4:1 et seq.* **within thirty (30) days** of the filing date of the decision. The filing date shall be three (3) days after the date of mailing to the parties, as shown below. In such cases, the Commissioner's review of the Commission's recommended sanction will be deferred and incorporated into the Commissioner's review of the finding of violation on appeal. Where a notice of appeal has been filed on or before the due date for exceptions to the Commission's recommended sanction (thirteen (13) days from the date the decision is mailed by the Commission), exceptions need not be filed by that date, but may be incorporated in the appellant's briefs on appeal.

Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

Mailing Date: January 27, 2026

***Resolution Adopting Decision
in Connection with C10-25***

Whereas, at its meeting on December 16, 2025, the School Ethics Commission (Commission) considered the Complaint, the Written Statement, and the Statement of Reasons submitted by Respondents, in this matter; and

Whereas, at its meeting on December 16, 2025, the Commission discussed finding that all named Respondents violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)*, and that only Respondent Gonzalez violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*; and

Whereas, at its meeting on December 16, 2025, the Commission discussed recommending a penalty of censure for Respondents' violations of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(c)* and *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(f)* and Respondent Gonzalez's violation of *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24.1(e)*; and

Whereas, at its meeting on January 27, 2026, the Commission reviewed and voted to approve the within decision as accurately memorializing its actions/findings from its meeting on December 16, 2025; and

Now Therefore Be It Resolved, that the Commission hereby adopts the decision and directs its staff to notify all parties to this action of its decision herein.

Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

I hereby certify that the Resolution was duly adopted by the School Ethics Commission at its public meeting on January 27, 2026.

Brigid C. Martens, Director
School Ethics Commission