

Before the School Ethics Commission
Docket No.: C102-25
Decision on Probable Cause

Dr. Malcolm X. Outlaw,
Complainant

v.

Dr. Steven Lewis,
Willingboro Board of Education, Burlington County,
Respondent

I. Procedural History

The above-captioned matter arises from a Complaint that was filed with the School Ethics Commission (Commission) on October 31, 2025,¹ by Dr. Malcolm X. Outlaw (Complainant), Superintendent of the Willingboro School District (District), alleging that Dr. Steven Lewis (Respondent), Business Administrator/Board Secretary (BA/BS) of the Willingboro 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 Respondent violated *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(b) and *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(c). Respondent filed a Written Statement on December 10, 2025.

The parties were notified by correspondence dated March 17, 2026, that the above-captioned matter would be discussed by the Commission at its meeting on March 24, 2026, to determine whether probable cause exists. Following its discussion on March 24, 2026, the Commission adopted a decision at its meeting on April 28, 2026, finding that there are insufficient facts and circumstances pled in the Complaint and in the Written Statement to lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act was violated as alleged in the Complaint.

II. Summary of the Pleadings

A. *The Complaint*

In Count 1, Complainant asserts that Respondent directed the high school print shop to produce promotional materials advertising the Willingboro Education Foundation (WEF) “2nd Annual Chimera Open” golf tournament. Complainant maintains that the “print shop teacher” informed Complainant that Respondent directed the print shop to make “brochures, banners, flyers, and related items.” According to Complainant, the work “was performed using [D]istrict equipment, materials and staff

¹ On October 13, 2025, Complainant filed a deficient Complaint; however, on October 31, 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.

time without Superintendent authorization,” and the WEF did not pay for these services. Complainant asserts Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(b)*, because he “used his official position to secure the use of public resources – [D]istrict printing services – for the benefit of an outside organization without authorization or payment” and violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(c)*, because “[d]irecting or facilitating [D]istrict services for an outside organization without authorization or compensation reflects personal/organizational involvement that creates a benefit and impairs objectivity or independence of judgment.”

In Count 2, Complainant contends that the printed materials “visibly promoted the WEF golf tournament and sponsorship opportunities, and included WEF branding and partner logos.” Complainant notes that there are not any invoices to show payment. Complainant further contends Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(b)*, because he used his “official position to enable free printing for an external organization” and violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(c)*, by providing “[D]istrict services without authorization or payment confer[ring] an advantage on WEF[, which] was not afforded to similarly situated entities.”

In Count 3, Complainant maintains that he learned of the “print job” on July 2, 2025, and reported it on that same day. To the best of his “knowledge and belief,” Complainant further maintains the District still has not received a payment from the WEF. Complainant asserts Respondent violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(b)*, because he “provided a benefit to an outside organization through [his] use of position” and violated *N.J.S.A. 18A:12-24(c)*, because the “continued absence of payment underscores a benefit to an outside organization obtained through” Respondent’s official capacity.

B. *Written Statement*

Respondent notes that in October 2024, the Board “voted to accept donations to the student scholarship fund from several upcoming fundraisers during that school year, including ‘[t]he Second Annual Chimera Open on April 22, 2025[.]’” Respondent further notes the Resolution was adopted on Complainant’s recommendation. Respondent maintains “[c]onsistent with the ‘partnership’ authorized by the Board, [Respondent] arranged for the [h]igh [s]chool print shop to prepare promotional material for the golf outing.”

Respondent argues that all three Counts in the Complaint “allege essentially the same conduct and the same violations” of the Act, and the evidence does not support the claims in the Complaint. According to Respondent, Complainant “recommended the October 2024 Board resolution explicitly noting that the April 2025 golf outing would be hosted ‘in partnership with’ the District.” Moreover, Respondent claims “[a]s a co-host and partner, it was entirely appropriate for the District to promote the event without charging the WEF for printing costs.” Further, Respondent maintains “reducing the net scholarship proceeds from the event by charging the WEF would have been contrary to the spirit of the ‘partnership’ and, even worse, would have hurt Willingboro High School students.” Respondent claims Complainant did not provide any evidence to demonstrate that Respondent or the WEF “secured any ‘unwarranted’ privileges or benefits from the printing of the materials in question.” Respondent further claims that the District had “a legitimate institutional interest in the success of the golf outing, the sole purpose of which was to provide scholarships to deserving Willingboro High School students,” and neither he nor the WEF had any personal stake in the matter.

III. Analysis

This matter is before the Commission for a determination of probable cause pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:28-9.7. A finding of probable cause is not an adjudication on the merits but, rather, an initial review whereupon the Commission makes a preliminary determination as to whether the matter should proceed to an adjudication on the merits, or whether further review is not warranted. Pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:28-9.7(a), probable cause “shall be found when the facts and circumstances presented in the complaint and written statement would lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act has been violated.”

Jurisdiction of the Commission

In reviewing the allegations in this matter, the Commission notes that its authority is limited to enforcing the Act, *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-21 *et seq.*, a set of minimum ethical standards by which all school officials must abide. In this regard, the Commission has jurisdiction only over matters arising under the Act, and it may not receive, hear, or consider any matter that does not arise under the Act, *N.J.A.C.* 6A:28-1.4(a).

With the jurisdiction of the Commission in mind, to the extent that Complainant seeks a determination from the Commission that Respondent may have violated any Board policies, the Commission advises that such determinations fall beyond the scope, authority, and jurisdiction of the Commission. Although Complainant may be able to pursue a cause of action(s) in the appropriate tribunal, the Commission is not the appropriate entity to adjudicate those claims. Accordingly, those claims are dismissed.

Alleged Violations of the Act

Complainant submits that, based on the conduct more fully detailed above, Respondent violated *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(b) and *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(c), and these provisions of the Act state:

b. No school official shall use or attempt to use his official position to secure unwarranted privileges, advantages or employment for himself, members of his immediate family or others;

c. No school official shall act in his official capacity in any matter where he, a member of his immediate family, or a business organization in which he has an interest, has a direct or indirect financial involvement that might reasonably be expected to impair his objectivity or independence of judgment. No school official shall act in his official capacity in any matter where he or a member of his immediate family has a personal involvement that is or creates some benefit to the school official or member of his immediate family;

In order to credit a violation of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(b), Complainant must provide sufficient factual evidence that Respondent used or attempted to use his official position to secure an unwarranted privilege, advantage or employment for himself, members of his immediate family, or “others.”

To credit a violation of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(c), Complainant must provide sufficient factual evidence that Respondent acted in his official capacity in a matter where he, or a member of his immediate family, had a direct or indirect financial involvement that might reasonably be expected to impair his objectivity, or in a matter where he had a personal involvement that created some benefit to him, or to a member of his immediate family.

After review, the Commission finds that there are insufficient facts and circumstances presented in the Complaint and the Written Statement to lead a reasonable person to believe that *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(b) and *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(c) were violated. As to a violation of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(b), the evidence submitted by Complainant does not establish that Respondent used his position to provide an unwarranted privilege or advantage to himself, a member of his family, or others when he submitted a request to the print shop to produce flyers, banners or brochures for the WEF golf fundraiser, which was raising funds for District scholarships. It is apparent that the WEF is adjacent to the schools and any money earned from the fundraiser flows directly back to the District. Whether the District permits printing services for the WEF without requiring payment is a matter of Board policy and Complainant has not demonstrated that Respondent sought to provide himself or the WEF with an unwarranted privilege or advantage. Notably, Complainant has not provided any evidence that the WEF was treated differently than other similar organizations, such as parent/teacher organizations. With respect to a violation of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(c), Complainant has not provided sufficient evidence that Respondent had a direct or indirect financial involvement with the WEF, or that authorizing use of the print shop would create some benefit to him. Therefore, and pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:28-9.7(b), the Commission dismisses the alleged violation(s) of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(b) and *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-24(c).

IV. Decision

In accordance with *N.J.S.A.* 18A:12-29(b), and for the reasons detailed herein, the Commission hereby notifies Complainant and Respondent that there are insufficient facts and circumstances pled in the Complaint and in the Written Statement to lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act was violated as alleged in the Complaint and, consequently, dismisses the above-captioned matter. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:28-9.7(b).

The within decision is a final decision of an administrative agency and, therefore, it is appealable only to the Superior Court-Appellate Division. *See, New Jersey Court Rule* 2:2-3(a). Under *New Jersey Court Rule* 2:4-1(b), a notice of appeal must be filed with the Appellate Division within 45 days from the date of mailing of this decision.

Robert W. Bender, Chairperson

Mailing Date: April 28, 2026

***Resolution Adopting Decision
in Connection with C102-25***

Whereas, at its meeting on March 24, 2026, the School Ethics Commission (Commission) considered the Complaint and the Written Statement submitted in connection with the above-referenced matter; and

Whereas, at its meeting on March 24, 2026, the Commission discussed finding that the facts and circumstances presented in the Complaint and the Written Statement would not lead a reasonable person to believe that the Act was violated, and therefore, dismissing the above-captioned matter; and

Whereas, at its meeting on April 28, 2026, the Commission reviewed and voted to approve the within decision as accurately memorializing its actions/findings from its meeting on March 24, 2026; 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 April 28, 2026.

Brigid C. Martens, Director
School Ethics Commission