

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
THE CERTIFICATES OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS
CHRISTOPHER HILLMAN : ORDER OF REVOCATION
_____ : DOCKET NO: 2324-174

At its meeting of June 27, 2024, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information from the Department of Education (DOE) – Office of Legal Affairs, Accountability & Compliance (OLAAC), and DOE - Office of Student Protection (OSP) regarding Christopher Hillman, including documents obtained from the Ocean County Prosecutor’s Office (OCPO). Hillman currently holds a Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS), issued in January 2010; and a Teacher of Middle School with Subject Matter Specialization: Science CEAS, issued in January 2010.

On February 11, 2022, Hillman was charged with Unlawful Possession of a Weapon – Handgun (2nd degree), N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5(B); Unlawful Possession of a Weapon – Rifle (3rd degree), N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5(C)(2); and Harassment (disorderly persons offense), N.J.S.A. 2C:33-4. It was alleged that a Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) found a loaded air rifle in his vehicle during a motor vehicle stop while the LEO was investigating a domestic violence incident. It was also alleged that after a temporary restraining order was issued against him, Hillman turned over a handgun to a LEO.

On December 15, 2023, Hillman pled guilty to Unlawful Possession of a Weapon – Handgun (2nd degree), N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5(B).

On December 20, 2023, OSP notified the Board that, as a result of his conviction for Unlawful Possession of a Weapon – Handgun (2nd degree), N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5(B), Hillman was

permanently disqualified from continued employment with any school or institution under the supervision of the Department of Education, in any position specified by law, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 *et seq.* On February 9, 2024, he was sentenced to five years of probation, along with other conditions.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted at its meeting of September 19, 2024, to issue Hillman an Order to Show Cause as to why the certificates he holds should not be revoked. On September 20, 2024, the Board sent Hillman the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. The Order provided that Hillman had thirty (30) days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B- 4.6(b). The certified mail copy was marked “Unclaimed” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Hillman did not file a response.

On October 30, 2024, the Board sent Hillman a second notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, providing him with an additional fifteen (15) days to respond to the Order to Show Cause pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(c). The certified mail copy was returned and marked “Unclaimed[,]” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Again, Hillman did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(e), the Board sent Hillman a hearing notice by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested, on February 5, 2025. The notice explained that because no answer was filed, there appeared to be no dispute as to material facts in this matter. Thus, Hillman was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause constituted conduct unbecoming a certificate holder, as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board found just cause to take action against his certificates. Hillman was also offered the opportunity

to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail copy was marked “Unclaimed” and the regular mail copy was not returned. Hillman did not file a response or request to appear before the Board.

The Board has the authority to “issue appropriate certificates to teach or to administer,” and “may revoke the same under rules and regulations prescribed by the State board.” *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38; *see also N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-3.2 and -4.4; *Morison v. Willingboro Bd. of Educ.*, 478 N.J. Super. 229 (App. Div. 2024), *cert. denied* 258 N.J. 143 (July 11, 2024). The Board may take action against a certificate holder on the basis of “demonstrated inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher, or other just cause.” *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.4(a); *see also Morison*, 478 N.J. Super. at 246, 248 (explaining the Board is responsible for protecting schoolchildren from improper teacher conduct and may suspend or revoke an educator’s continued ability to serve as a teacher at any public school based on unbecoming conduct).

Because Hillman failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause, the allegations are deemed admitted. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(c). Consequently, at its meeting of March 6, 2026, the Board considered only the allegations in the September 19, 2024 Order to Show Cause and the information received from the OSP, OLAAC, and OCPO. Because the allegations were deemed admitted, the Board concluded that no material facts related to Hillman’s offenses were in dispute. And because no material facts related to Hillman’s conduct were in dispute, the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.6(h).

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Hillman’s actions here constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Based on the undisputed facts in this matter, the Board finds that Hillman engaged in conduct unbecoming of an educator.

Unbecoming conduct is defined as “conduct ‘which adversely affects the morale or efficiency of the [department]’ or ‘has a tendency to destroy public respect for [government] employees and confidence in the operation of [public] services.’” *Bound Brook Bd. of Educ. v. Ciripompa*, 228 N.J. 4, 13 (2017) (quoting *In re Young*, 202 N.J. 50, 66 (2010) (citing *Karins v. Atl. City*, 152 N.J. 532, 554 (1998))). “[A] finding of unbecoming conduct ‘need not be predicated upon the violation of any particular rule or regulation, but may be based merely upon the violation of the implicit standard of good behavior which devolves upon one who stands in the public eye as an upholder of that which is morally and legal correct.’” *Id.* at 13-14 (quoting *Karins*, 152 N.J. at 555). “It focuses on the morale, efficiency, and public perception of an entity, and how those concerns are harmed by allowing teachers to behave inappropriately while holding public employment.” *Id.* at 14. “The touchstone of the determination lies in the certificate holder’s ‘fitness to discharge the duties and functions of one’s office or position.’” *Young*, 202 N.J. at 66 (quoting *In re Grossman*, 127 N.J. Super. 13, 29 (App. Div. 1974)).

Here, the Board finds possessing a weapon illegally clearly demonstrates unbecoming conduct, and that this conduct, along with Hillman’s conviction for Unlawful Possession of a Weapon – Handgun (2nd degree), N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5(B), violates the implicit standard of good behavior expected of public school teachers. Further, in enacting the Criminal History Review statute, N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1 *et seq.*, the Legislature sought to protect public school pupils from contact with individuals whom it deemed to be a danger. The strong legislative policy statement is also in accord with the Commissioner’s long-standing belief that teachers must serve as role models for their students. Here, OSP determined that Hillman’s conviction permanently disqualifies him from public school employment. *See N.J.S.A. 18A:6-7.1(c)(2) and (d)*. Thus, the

Board finds that Hillman engaged in conduct unbecoming an educator and provides the basis for the Board's finding.

Having found that Hillman engaged in unbecoming conduct, the Board must now determine the appropriate penalty to be applied. In doing so, the Board considers the "nature and gravity of the offenses under all the circumstances involved, any evidence as to provocation, extenuation or aggravation," and any "harm or injurious effect" on the maintenance of discipline and the proper administration of the school system. *In re Fulcomer*, 93 N.J. Super. 404, 422 (App. Div. 1967). Central to this evaluation is the understanding that "[t]eachers ... are professional employees to whom the people have entrusted the care and custody of ... school children. This heavy duty requires a degree of self-restraint and controlled behavior rarely requisite to other types of employment." *Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 S.L.D. 302, 321. Fitness to teach depends on a broad range of factors, including the teacher's impact and effect upon the students, because a "teacher works in a sensitive area in a schoolroom" and "shapes the attitude of young minds toward the society in which they live." *Grossman*, 127 N.J. at 30 (quoting *Adler v. Bd. of Educ. of City of New York*, 342 U.S. 485 (1952)). Importantly, unfitness to hold a position in a school system may be shown by one incident if sufficiently flagrant. *Fulcomer*, 93 N.J. Super. at 421; *Redcay v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 130 N.J.L. 369, 371 (1943), *aff'd*, 131 N.J.L. 326 (E & A 1944).

In this instance, the Board concludes that the appropriate response to Hillman's breach in conduct of an educator is revocation of his certificates. Hillman's conduct of illegally possessing an unregistered handgun demonstrates he is unfit to discharge the duties and functions as a public-school teacher, and demonstrates strong evidence that revocation is appropriate. Allowing him to maintain certification to teach in a public school would have a negative impact on the proper

administration of the school system. Further, the record established that, as a result of his conviction for Unlawful Possession of a Weapon – Handgun (2nd degree), N.J.S.A. 2C:39-5(B), Hillman is disqualified from public school employment. An educator who is not qualified for public school employment should not be able to hold himself out as a public educator. Thus, revocation of his certificates is the appropriate response in this matter.

Accordingly, on March 6, 2026, the Board voted to revoke Hillman’s certificates. On this 17th day of April 2026, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Christopher Hillman’s Teacher of Elementary School in Grades K-6 Certificate of Eligibility with Advanced Standing (CEAS) and Teacher of Middle School with Subject Matter Specialization: Science CEAS are hereby REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Hillman return his paper certificates, if issued, to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Certification and Induction, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.



Rani Singh, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing: 4/17/2026
By Certified and Regular mail

Appeals may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to the provisions of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38.4.