

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:  
CASE NUMBER  
C 2025-050

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: State Ethics Commission  
ADDRESS: 201 Executive Center Drive  
Suite 150  
Columbia, SC 29210  
TELEPHONE NUMBER: (803) 253-4192

RESPONDENT: Desareta Jones  
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]  
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]  
TITLE: Candidate – York County School Board  
District #4

Section 8-13-1308, S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended, requires candidates to file Campaign Disclosures within ten (10) days of receiving or expending an accumulated aggregate of \$500.00 or more; fifteen (15) days prior to each election; within ten (10) days of the end of each quarter; and a final report when the campaign account is closed. In addition, certified campaign reports detailing campaign contributions and expenditures must contain the total of contributions accepted, the name and address of each person making a contribution, the total expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate or committee, and the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made from campaign funds. Pursuant to Section 8-13-1362 and Regulation 52-504 (C), the Pre-Election and quarterly report are required even when there have been no contributions or expenditures.

Records of the State Ethics Commission indicate that a Quarter 4 2022 Campaign Disclosure was due no later than January 10, 2023. Respondent was sent an email reminder thirty days before and ten days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirement by a certified letter dated February 8, 2024 as described in the attached. To date, a properly completed Quarter 4 2022 Campaign Disclosure has not been received. All in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B) and Section 8-13-1308 (F), S.C. Code Ann., 1976, as amended.

If there is a finding of probable cause, the following documents become public record: the complaint, the response (if any) by respondent, and the notice of hearing. If a hearing is to be held, the final order and all exhibits become public record. If no hearing is held following a finding of probable cause, the final disposition of the matter becomes public record.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF Richland

Personally appeared before me Meghan Walker Dayson who, first being duly sworn, says that she has read and knows the contents of the above complaint and that the allegations contained therein, are true and correct to the best of her own knowledge, except for those matters therein based upon information and belief, and as to those she believes them to be true.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this  
8th day of May, 2025

[REDACTED]  
Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director

[REDACTED]  
Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission expires 01/22/26

SEC-7 (Revised 3/2022)

REPLY TO: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210 (803)253-4192  
ELECTRONIC COPIES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA	)	
COUNTY OF RICHLAND	)	BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
	)	
IN THE MATTER OF:	)	
	)	
Complaint C2025-050	)	
	)	
State Ethics Commission	)	<b>NOTICE OF HEARING</b>
Complainant.	)	
	)	
Desareta Jones	)	
Respondent.	)	
_____	)	

The State Ethics Commission has determined that there is probable cause pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, in the above-captioned complaint. The Commission will convene a formal hearing into the matter in accordance with Section 8-13-320(10)(i) & (j), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and State Ethics Commission Regulations, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 52-707 (1997 Cum. Supp.) on Thursday, February 19, 2026 at 9:30 a.m. at the Commission Hearing Room located at: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210.

The following allegations will be heard:

**COUNT ONE**  
**FAILURE TO FILE CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Desarea Jones, candidate for York County School Board, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2022 Quarter 4/Final Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR), in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

**COUNT TWO**  
**FAILURE TO DISCLOSE CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURE**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(F)(3), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Desarea Jones, candidate for York County School Board, did in Richland County, fail

to disclose an October 4, 2022 expenditure to the State Election Commission in the amount of \$25.00, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

**COUNT THREE**  
**FAILURE TO PROPERLY DISCLOSE CAMPAIGN EXPENDITURE**  
**SECTION 8-13-1308(F)(4), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Desarea Jones, candidate for York County School Board, did in Richland County, incorrectly report expenditures made to Facebook, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(4).

**COUNT FOUR**  
**FAILURE TO OPEN CAMPAIGN BANK ACCOUNT**  
**SECTION 8-13-1312, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Desarea Jones, candidate for York County School Board, did in Richland County, fail to open a campaign bank account, in violation of Section 8-13-1312.

**COUNT FIVE**  
**FAILURE TO MAINTAIN CAMPAIGN RECORDS**  
**SECTION 8-13-1302, S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Desarea Jones, candidate for York County School Board, did in Richland County, fail to maintain campaign records, in violation of Section 8-13-1302.

You have the right to be represented by counsel, the right to call and examine witnesses, the right to introduce exhibits, and the right to cross-examine opposing witnesses. This hearing will be open to the public as required by Section 8-13-320(10)(j), Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended. The procedures to be followed are set forth in the Administrative Procedures Act, Section 1-23-10, et seq., Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, the State Ethics Act, Section 8-13-100, et seq., Code of Laws, South Carolina, 1976, as amended, and State Ethics Commission Regulations, S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 52-707 (1997 Cum. Supp.).

A pre-hearing conference may be scheduled prior to the hearing to allow exchange of witness lists and evidence, marking of exhibits, and disposition of motions or pleadings. In the

event you fail to appear, judgment by default will be rendered against you. If there are any questions concerning the above notice or hearing times, please contact the State Ethics Commission.



Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director  
State Ethics Commission

Dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day,  
of July 2025.

*Certificate of Service by Certified Mail*

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on RESPONDENT Desareta Jones, 1094 Kings Bottom Drive, Fort Mill, SC 29715 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 30<sup>th</sup> day of July 2025, by CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



**Rachael O'Bryan, Administrative Assistant**

Columbia, South Carolina

State Ethics Commission

(803) 253-4192

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION  
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
IN THE MATTER OF: )  
COMPLAINT C2025-050 )  
State Ethics Commission, )  
Complainant, )  
Desareta Jones, )  
Respondent. )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**CONSENT ORDER**

This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on May 8, 2025. Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act), the Complaint against Desareta Jones (Respondent) was considered by the Commission and probable cause was found to warrant an evidentiary hearing. Prior to the call of the case, Respondent agreed to the following:

**STATEMENTS OF FACT**

1. Respondent was an unsuccessful candidate for York County School District Board of Trustees, District 4, in a November 8, 2022, election.
2. Prior to the filing of the Complaint, Respondent's most recently filed Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) was a Pre-Election/Quarter 3 2022 CDR reflecting a zero balance. However, Respondent also had a Quarter 4 2022 CDR in a "saved, not filed" status disclosing two (2) personal contributions and two (2) expenditures.
3. In a February 8, 2024, certified letter mailed to Respondent's address of record, the Commission attempted to notify Respondent of her failure to file the Quarter 4 2022 CDR. According to the United States Postal Service, the certified letter was "Delivered, Left with Individual" on February 12, 2024, at 2:20 p.m. The return receipt does not contain Respondent's signature and appears to read "V. Jones"

4. Following the filing of the Complaint, Commission Investigators learned that Respondent did not open a campaign bank account. Rather, Respondent used personal funds to make the following expenditures: (1) \$117.70 for social media advertisements on September 30, 2022; (2) \$25.00 for a voter list on October 4, 2022; (3) \$1,647.82 for “mailbox stuffers” on October 21, 2022; (4) \$480.00 for yard signs on October 24, 2022; and (5) \$624.70 for social media advertisements on October 31, 2022.
5. Commission Investigators subsequently requested receipts and invoices related to Respondent’s campaign expenditures. Respondent produced invoices related to the social media advertisements and the voter list, but was unable to produce any documents related to the purchases for yard signs and mailbox stuffers.
6. On February 5, 2025, Respondent filed a Quarter 4/Final 2022 CDR disclosing all required information.

**CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

Based upon the Statements of Fact, the Commission concludes, as a matter of law:

1. At all times relevant, Respondent was a “candidate” pursuant to Section 8-13-1300(4). Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.
2. Given that Respondent’s final expenditure was made on October 31, 2022, Respondent was required to file, but failed to file, a Quarter 4/Final 2022 CDR pursuant to Section 8-13-1308(B), which provides, in relevant part:

Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report, additional certified campaign reports must be filed within ten days following the end of each calendar quarter in which contributions are received or expenditures are made, whether before or after an election until the campaign account undergoes final disbursement pursuant to the provisions of Section 8-13-1370.

*JA #2*

3. Respondent used a personal bank account for campaign contributions and expenditures in violation of Section 8-13-1312, which provides, in relevant part:

. . . Except as otherwise provided under Section 8-13-1348(C), expenses paid on behalf of a candidate or committee must be drawn from the campaign account and issued on a check signed by the candidate or a duly authorized officer of a committee. All contributions received by the candidate or committee, directly or indirectly, must be deposited in the campaign account by the candidate or committee within ten days after receipt . . .

4. Respondent failed to maintain records related to her campaign expenditures for mailbox stuffers and yard signs in violation of Section 8-13-1302, which provides, in relevant part:

(A) A candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee must maintain and preserve an account of: . . . (3) the total amount of expenditures made by or on behalf of the candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee; (4) the name and address of each person to whom an expenditure is made including the date, amount, purpose, and beneficiary of the expenditure; (5) all receipted bills, canceled checks, or other proof of payment for each expenditure. . .

(B) The candidate, committee, or ballot measure committee must maintain and preserve all receipted bills and account required by this article for four years.

5. Section 8-13-1510(A) provides, in relevant part:

. . . a person required to file a report or statement under this chapter who files a late statement or report . . . must be assessed a civil penalty as follows: (1) a fine of one hundred dollars if the statement or report is not filed within five days after the established deadline provided by law in this chapter; and (2) after notice has been given by certified mail or registered mail that a required statement or report has not been filed, a fine of ten dollars per calendar day for the first ten days after notice has been given, and one hundred dollars for each additional calendar day in which the required statement or report is not filed, not exceeding five thousand dollars.

6. Section 8-13-320(10)(l) allows the Commission to issue a civil penalty of up to \$2,000.00 for each violation of the Ethics Act.

JK #3

7. Section 8-13-130 allows the Commission to “levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is in violation” of the Ethics Act.

### **DISCUSSION**

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(B) for failing to file a Quarter 4/Final 2022 CDR,<sup>1</sup> one (1) count of Section 8-13-1312 for failing to use a campaign bank account, and one (1) count of Section 8-13-1302 for failing to properly maintain campaign records. Through this Consent Order, Respondent acknowledges she violated the Ethics Act as described herein. In mitigation, Respondent states that she decided to run for office after a group of concerned citizens approached her about the future of the District. Respondent, who had children in District schools, agreed to run. Respondent states that her campaign was entirely self-funded and that she believed she had filed the necessary reports. Respondent states she did not understand that she had only saved her CDR rather than actually filing it. Respondent further states that she did not receive the Commission’s February 8, 2024, certified letter, and believes that a family member may have signed for it without her knowledge. Respondent states that her mother suffered a stroke in December 2023 which prompted her temporary relocation to her mother’s residence near Concord, North Carolina. Finally, Respondent asserts that she takes full responsibility for her errors and understands that ignorance of the law does not negate her duties under the Ethics Act.

### **DISPOSITION**

1. The Commission hereby finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(B), one (1) count of Section 8-13-1312, and one (1) count of Section 8-13-1302.

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission also found probable cause to believe Respondent failed to properly disclose two (2) expenditures in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F). However, given that Respondent has since properly disclosed this activity, the Commission declines to proceed as to these counts.

*JX #4*

2. The Commission hereby adopts the Statements of Fact, Conclusions of Law, Discussion, and Disposition as agreed upon by the Respondent.

THEREFORE, the Commission hereby issues this Public Reprimand to Respondent and orders the Respondent to pay the Commission, within six (6) months from receipt of this Order, a late-filing penalty of \$100.00,<sup>2</sup> a reduced civil penalty of \$200.00 (\$100.00 for the violation of Section 8-13-1312 and \$100.00 for the violation of Section 8-13-1302), and an administrative fee of \$500.00, for a total of \$800.00.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that she is not only admitting to violations of the Ethics Act, but also confessing to a judgment of \$800.00 (less any money paid to the Commission) in the event she does not make full and timely payment as provided for in this Order. In that event, the Commission shall file a Judgment against Respondent in the Clerk of Court's Office in the County of Respondent's last known residence. Upon said filing, the Clerk of Court shall enter this Order in the amount of \$800.00 (less any money paid to the Commission) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 11<sup>th</sup> DAY OF February 2026.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
DESARETA JONES  
RESPONDENT

<sup>2</sup> The Commission limits Respondent's late-filing penalty to \$100.00 pursuant to Section 8-13-1510(A)(1) given the uncertainty surrounding Respondent's receipt of the Commission's February 8, 2024, certified letter.