

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:

CASE NUMBER

c 2022-131

COMPLAINT FORM

COMPLAINANT: James Manning

RESPONDENT: Lashonda McFadden

ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

ADDRESS: [REDACTED]

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 803-351-7409

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 803-351-7409

TITLE: Chairman, Richland Sch. Dist. Two Board

TITLE: Member, Richland Sch. Dist. Two Board

Set forth in detail specific facts upon which you based your complaint against above-named respondent (only detailed, clear factual allegations will be considered. If additional space is needed, attach supplemental sheets).

On September 10, 2022, the Omni Hotels & Resorts charged Richland School District Two's (District) procurement card for \$425.00 for a hotel room upgrade for three nights and pet cleaning fee on behalf of Respondent Lashonda McFadden, District Board of Trustees (Board) Member. Mrs. McFadden incurred this travel expense while attending the Consortium of State School Boards Associations Urban Boards Alliance Symposium, held September 8-9, 2022, in Atlanta, Georgia. The charges are as follows:

- Room Upgrade:
  - o 9-7-22 Room upgraded to a suite \$100
  - o 9-8-22 Room upgraded to a suite \$100
  - o 9-9-22 Room upgraded to a suite \$100
- Cleaning Room Fee
  - o Guest had pet in room \$125.00.

On September 12, 2022, the District sent Mrs. McFadden a letter, which provided a repayment deadline of October 10, 2022. On September 12, 2022, Mrs. McFadden requested that District administration reconcile the \$425.00 charge with the unencumbered funds allocated to her board travel account. (Continued on next page)

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 Christine H. Lewis who, first being duly sworn, says that he/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 his/her own knowledge, except for those matters therein based upon information and belief, and as to those he/she believes them to be true.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this  
13<sup>th</sup> day of October, 2022

[REDACTED]

Notary Public for South Carolina  
My Commission expires June 29<sup>th</sup> 2026



[REDACTED]

Complainant Signature

SEC-7 (Revised 3/2022)

## COMPLAINT FORM

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On September 12, 2022, Mrs. McFadden received notification that District administration would not be able to accommodate her request.

On October 11, 2022, Complainant James Manning, Chairman of the District's Board of Trustees, sent Mrs. McFadden a letter regarding her failure to adhere to the established payment deadline and that further action would ensue. Mrs. McFadden responded to Mr. Manning's October 11 correspondence and requested that the District use her board stipend to cover the outstanding expenses.

District Board Policy BID, Board Member Compensation and Expenses, provides:

The district will reimburse board members for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in attending any meeting or conference when on official business of the board or the school district. Such expenses may include the cost of attendance at conferences of school boards associations and other professional meetings/visitations when these costs are within the budget. Board members will be reimbursed according to the same expenditure standards as district employees under policy DKC (Expense Authorization Reimbursement).

The September 12, 2022, expense is not a reasonable or necessary expense. The charges for a room upgrade for three nights and a pet cleaning fee exceed the single room conference rate covered by the district. As a result, Mrs. McFadden's failure to reimburse the District for the outstanding expenses is in violation of Board Policy BID.

There is an established pattern of delay with regard to Mrs. McFadden's travel reimbursement. She previously requested a travel advance to attend the National School Board Association's Equity Symposium & Advocacy Institute Conference in Washington D.C. The District processed the requested advance, which Mrs. McFadden deposited in her bank account on January 18, 2022. However, Mrs. McFadden did not attend the conference, scheduled for January 23-25, 2022.

On February 8, 2022, Mrs. McFadden communicated that she wanted to reimburse the District. As a result, on February 10, 2022, the District provided detailed instructions regarding reimbursement procedures. On February 11, 2022, the District communicated a repayment deadline of February 24, 2022. After not submitting the reimbursement, Mrs. McFadden received subsequent correspondence from the District on February 28, 2022, requesting an anticipated date of repayment. On March 22, 2022, Mrs. McFadden submitted the reimbursement to the District.

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
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IN THE MATTER OF: )  
)  
Complaint C2022-131 )  
)  
James Manning )  
Complainant. )  
)  
Lashonda McFadden )  
Respondent. )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**NOTICE OF HEARING**

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 State Ethics Commission will, therefore, convene a formal hearing into the matters, 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, April 17, 2025 at 9:30 a.m. at the State Ethics Commission Hearing Room located at: 201 Executive Center Drive, Suite 150, Columbia, South Carolina 29210.

The following allegations will be heard:

**COUNT ONE**  
**USE OF OFFICIAL POSITION TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC INTEREST**  
**SECTION 8-13-700(A), S. C. CODE ANNOTATED, 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Lashonda McFadden, Richland School District Two (RSD2) Board Member, did in Richland County, knowingly use her official position to obtain an economic interest for herself after failing to timely reimburse RSD2 \$425.00 for a room upgrade and pet cleaning fee incurred while attending the COSSBA Symposium in Atlanta, GA in September 2022, in violation of Section 8-13-700(A).

**COUNT TWO**  
**USE OF OFFICIAL POSITION TO OBTAIN ECONOMIC INTEREST**  
**SECTION 8-13-700(A), S. C. CODE ANNOTATED, 1976, AS AMENDED**

That Lashonda McFadden, Richland School District Two (RSD2) Board Member, did in Richland County, knowingly use her official position to obtain an economic interest for herself after failing to timely reimburse RSD2 after missing a NSBA conference in January 2022, in violation of Section 8-13-700(A).

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.

Dated this 19<sup>th</sup> day,  
of September 2024.

  
Meghan Walker Dayson, Executive Director  
State Ethics Commission

**Certificate of Service by Certified Mail**

I hereby certify that a copy of this **NOTICE OF HEARING** was duly served on Respondent Lashonda McFadden, 501 Aiken Court, Columbia, SC 29223 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of September 2024, by **CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED**, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



**Rachael O'Bryan, Administrative Assistant**  
State Ethics Commission

Columbia, South Carolina

(803) 253-4192

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )  
COUNTY OF RICHLAND )  
IN THE MATTER OF: )  
COMPLAINT C2022-131 )  
James Manning, )  
Complainant, )  
Lashonda McFadden, )  
Respondent. )  
\_\_\_\_\_ )

BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

**CONSENT ORDER**

This matter comes before the South Carolina State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a complaint filed on October 14, 2022. Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act), the Complaint against Lashonda McFadden (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. At all times relevant, Respondent served as a member of the Richland School District Two (District) Board of Trustees (Board). The District uses a procurement card (Pcard) to cover Board members' necessary, office-related expenses.
2. At all times relevant, District policy BIB provided that the District "will reimburse board members for all reasonable and necessary expenses incurred in attending any meeting or conference when on official business of the board or the school district. . . Board members will be reimbursed according to the same expenditure standards. . .under policy DKC. . . ."
3. At all times relevant, District policy DKC provided, in relevant part, that the District would pay the actual hotel rate for single accommodations and that Board members would be personally responsible for additional hotel charges. The District's practice required Board

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members to submit reimbursements to the District within thirty (30) calendar days of the District covering unauthorized charges.

4. On September 8, 2022 and September 9, 2022, Respondent attended the Consortium of State School Boards Associations Urban Boards Alliance Symposium (Symposium) in Atlanta, Georgia, which required overnight accommodations. In anticipation of Respondent attending the Symposium, the District used its Pcard to reserve a room for Respondent at the Omni Hotel & Resorts in Atlanta, Georgia from September 7, 2022 through September 10, 2022.
5. Upon arriving at the Omni Hotel & Resorts on September 7, 2022, Respondent upgraded her room for the duration of her stay. When Respondent checked out of her room on September 10, 2022, she charged the following to the District Pcard that was on file with the hotel: i) the cost of the room as reserved by the District, ii) an additional \$100.00 per night for the room upgrade, and iii) \$125.00 for a pet cleaning fee. The cost of the upgrade and the pet cleaning fee totaled \$425.00.
6. On September 12, 2022, District Superintendent Dr. Baron Davis notified Respondent via electronic and United States Post Office mail that the \$425.00 was an unauthorized charge and that Respondent was responsible for reimbursing the District \$425.00 within thirty (30) days. Respondent replied to suggest that the additional charge be deducted from her Board stipend account, stating the stipend account had sufficient funds. Respondent also accused the District of treating her differently from other Board members with regard to travel expenses.
7. On October 19, 2022, after the filing of the Complaint, Respondent reimbursed the District \$425.00 via money order.

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### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

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

1. At all times relevant, Respondent was a public official, as defined by Section 8-13-100(27).

Therefore, the Commission has personal and subject matter jurisdiction.

2. Section 8-13-700(A) provides, in relevant part:

No public official ... may knowingly use his official office ... to obtain an economic interest for himself, ... This prohibition does not extend to the incidental use of public materials, personnel, or equipment, subject to or available for a [public official's] use that does not result in additional public expense.

3. Section 8-13-100(11)(a) defines "economic interest," as:

an interest distinct from that of the general public in a purchase, sale, lease, contract, option, or other transaction or arrangement involving property or services in which a [public official] may gain an economic benefit of fifty dollars or more.

4. Section 8-13-130 allows the Commission to "levy an enforcement or administrative fee on a person who is in violation of any provision of the Ethics Act."

5. Section 8-13-320(10)(l)(i) allows the Commission to require payment of a civil penalty of up to two thousand dollars for each violation of the Ethics Act.

### DISCUSSION

The Commission found probable cause to charge Respondent with one (1) count of violating Section 8-13-700(A) for knowingly using her official position to obtain an economic benefit for herself by failing to timely reimburse the District for a \$425.00 room upgrade and pet cleaning fee when attending the Symposium.<sup>1</sup> Through this Consent Order, Respondent

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<sup>1</sup> The Commission also found probable cause to charge Respondent with violating Section 8-13-700(A) for failing to timely reimburse the District after missing a January 2022 conference. The Commission's investigation revealed that Respondent missed the January 2022 conference due to her mother having a medical emergency and that she thereafter initiated reimbursement discussions with the District. Given this information and that Respondent has fully reimbursed the District, the Commission declines to proceed as to this count in exchange for Respondent entering into this Consent Order.

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acknowledges she violated the Ethics Act as described herein.

In mitigation, Respondent states that there was little direction with regard to using Board travel funds until August 2022 and that she followed her current understanding of the District's practice regarding the use of Board funds to cover travel expenses. Specifically, Respondent asserts that the \$425.00 was not "unauthorized" because the District authorized Board members to charge all accommodation costs to the District's Pcard so long as Board members reimbursed the District for the cost of unnecessary expenses. Additionally, Respondent states that she believed her stipend account could be used in lieu of reimbursement. She further asserts that the District did not have an official policy for timely reimbursement, but that she nevertheless remitted payment shortly after being informed that neither her Pcard nor her District stipend account were appropriate for covering the \$425.00.

**DISPOSITION**

1. The Commission hereby finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of 8-13-700(A).
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 for violations of the Ethics Act;

AND orders Respondent to pay the Commission, within twelve (12) months from receipt of this Order, a reduced civil penalty of \$500.00 and an administrative fee of \$450.00, for a total of \$950.00.

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 \$950.00 (less any money paid to the Commission) in the event she does not make full and timely payment as provided for in this

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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 \$950.00 less any money paid to the Commission in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS ORDERED THIS 5 DAY OF March, 2025.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION



F. XAVIER STARKES, CHAIR



LASHONDA MCFADDEN  
RESPONDENT