

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

FOR COMMISSION USE ONLY:
CASE NUMBER
c 2024-083

COMPLAINT FORM

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

RESPONDENT: Demestress C. Bell-Williams
ADDRESS: [REDACTED]
TELEPHONE NUMBER: [REDACTED]
TITLE: Candidate – Richland County School District 2

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 Campaign Disclosure was due no later than January 10, 2021, April 10, 2021, July 10, 2021, October 10, 2021, January 10, 2022, April 10, 2022, July 10, 2022, October 10, 2022, January 10, 2023, April 10, 2023, July 10, 2023, October 10, 2023, January 10, 2024, April 10, 2024, July 10, 2024, and October 10, 2024. Respondent was sent an email reminder thirty days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline from January 2021 through October 2021 and was sent an email reminder thirty days before and ten days before each Campaign Disclosure deadline after October 2021.

Respondent was reminded of the filing requirement by letters dated September 11, 2023, November 9, 2023, and January 12, 2024 as described in the attached. To date, a properly completed Quarter 4 2020, Quarter 1 2021, Quarter 2 2021, Quarter 3 2021, Quarter 4 2021, Quarter 1 2022, Quarter 2 2022, Quarter 3 2022, Quarter 4 2022, Quarter 1 2023, Quarter 2 2023, Quarter 3 2023, Quarter 4 2023, Quarter 1, 2024, Quarter 2 2024, or Quarter 3 2024 Campaign Disclosures have 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 Dawson 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
31st day of October, 2024

[REDACTED]
Meghan Walker Dawson, Executive Director

[REDACTED]
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission expires 01/24/26

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

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)	
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)	BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
)	
IN THE MATTER OF:)	
)	
Complaint C2024-083)	
)	
State Ethics Commission)	NOTICE OF HEARING
Complainant.)	
)	
Demestress C. Bell-Williams)	
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 A CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE REPORT
SECTION 8-13-1308(B), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, candidate for Richland School District Two School Board, did in Richland County, fail to file a 2020 Quarter 4/Final Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR), in violation of Section 8-13-1308(B).

COUNT TWO
FAILURE TO DISCLOSE CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTION
SECTION 8-13-1308(F)(1), S.C. CODE ANN., 1976, AS AMENDED

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November

13, 2020 contribution of \$101.00 from Big Homie Little Homie, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(1).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 2, 2020 expenditure of \$75.00 to NGP Van, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 4, 2020 expenditure of \$23.36 to Kriger, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 5, 2020 expenditure of \$7.15 to Richland 2 School Board, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 5, 2020 expenditure of \$72.33 to Total Grace, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 9, 2020 expenditure of \$101.00 to Big Homie Little Homie, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 9, 2020 expenditure of \$25.31, a transfer of funds to Williams, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 10, 2020 expenditure of \$14.14 to Vantiv Ecommerce, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 13, 2020 expenditure of \$50.00, a transfer of funds to Williams, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 16, 2020 expenditure of \$27.95, a transfer of funds to Dr. Dee, in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).


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

That Demestress C. Bell-Williams, did in Richland County, fail to disclose a November 19, 2020 expenditure of \$8.90, a cashier's check to close Respondent's campaign bank account,

in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F)(3).

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 23rd 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 Demestress C. Bell-Williams, 532 Old Ellore Road, Orangeburg, SC 29115 by depositing said **NOTICE OF HEARING** in the United States mail, Columbia, South Carolina on this 25th day of July 2025, by CERTIFIED MAIL, E-RETURN RECEIPT REQUESTED, appropriate postage affixed, and a return address clearly indicated on said envelope.



Columbia, South Carolina

Rachael O'Bryan, Administrative Assistant
State Ethics Commission (803) 253-4192

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)	
COUNTY OF RICHLAND)	BEFORE THE STATE ETHICS COMMISSION
)	
IN THE MATTER OF:)	
COMPLAINT C2024-083)	
)	
State Ethics Commission,)	CONSENT ORDER
Complainant,)	
)	
Demestress C. Bell-Williams,)	
Respondent.)	
_____)	

This matter comes before the State Ethics Commission (Commission) by way of a Complaint filed on October 31, 2024. Pursuant to Section 8-13-320(10)(i) of the South Carolina Ethics, Government Accountability, and Campaign Reform Act (Ethics Act), the Complaint against Demestress C. Bell-Williams (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 Richland County School District Two Board of Trustees in a November 3, 2020, general election.
2. Prior to the filing of the Complaint, Respondent’s most recently filed Campaign Disclosure Report (CDR) was a 2020 Pre-Election/Quarter 3 CDR reflecting a positive on-hand balance of contributions.
3. Respondent thereafter failed to file additional CDRs.
4. In a certified letter dated September 11, 2023, the Commission attempted to notify Respondent of her failure to file. The letter was mailed to Respondent’s address of record in Columbia. The letter was ultimately returned to the Commission on February 9, 2024, as “Return to Sender – Attempted – Not Known.”

JA #1

5. On November 9, 2023, the penalty letter was re-mailed via certified mail to Respondent's updated address of record in Orangeburg.
6. On January 8, 2024, Commission staff checked the status of the November 9, 2023, certified letter with the United States Postal Service (USPS). USPS showed the letter was still "in transit."
7. On January 12, 2024, Commission staff re-mailed the penalty letter to Respondent's updated address of record in Orangeburg via first-class mail with tracking. According to USPS, the first-class letter was delivered to Respondent on January 16, 2024, at 6:33 p.m.
8. On September 9, 2024, a Commission staff member telephoned Respondent about the penalty letter.
9. After no further response from Respondent, the Complaint was filed on October 31, 2024.
10. Following the filing of the Complaint, Respondent's campaign bank account records were subpoenaed. The records revealed that Respondent's campaign bank account was opened on August 3, 2020, and reached a \$0.00 balance on November 19, 2020.
11. On January 22, 2026, Respondent filed a Quarter 4/Final 2020 CDR.

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. Because the campaign bank account closed on November 19, 2020, Respondent was required to file a Quarter 4/Final 2020 CDR pursuant to Section 8-13-1308(B), which provides, in relevant part:

Following the filing of an initial certified campaign report,

JA # 2

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.

3. Section 8-13-1510 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 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.

4. 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 2020 CDR¹. Through this Consent Order, Respondent acknowledges she violated the Ethics Act as described herein. In mitigation, Respondent states that 2020 was her first time running for public office and that she signed up to run just seventy-six (76) days prior to the election. Respondent further states that she has moved several times since 2020 and that she did not receive the Commission’s penalty letter. Finally, Respondent states that she was (and is) caring for a parent with failing health, which left her unable to prioritize her filing obligations once Commission staff contacted her in September of 2024.

¹ The Commission also found probable cause to believe Respondent failed to disclose contributions and expenditures in violation of Section 8-13-1308(F). However, given that Respondent has since disclosed this information, the Commission declines to proceed as to these counts.

JH #3

Respondent states it was not her intent to conceal any information from the Commission.

DISPOSITION

1. The Commission finds Respondent in violation of one (1) count of Section 8-13-1308(B).
2. The Commission adopts the Statements of Fact, Conclusions of Law, Discussion, and Disposition as agreed upon by the Respondent.

THEREFORE, the Commission hereby issues this Written Warning and orders Respondent to pay the Commission, within six (6) months from receipt of this Order, a late-filing penalty of \$100.00 and an administrative fee of \$400.00, for a total of \$500.00. The Commission declines to assess any accrued late-filing penalties given the uncertainty surrounding Respondent's receipt of the Commission's penalty letters.

By executing this Consent Order, Respondent understands that she is consenting to a judgment of \$500.00 if she does not make payment as provided for in this Order, in which case the Commission shall file a Judgment against Respondent with the County Clerk of Court in Respondent's last known County of residence, who shall enter this Order in the amount of \$500.00 (less any money paid) in its Judgment Rolls, without cost to the Commission.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 11th DAY OF February 2026.

STATE ETHICS COMMISSION

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]

DEMESTRESS C. BELL-WILLIAMS
RESPONDENT