

July 18, 2024

Dr. Antoine Hickman
Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Special Education/Early Intervention Services
Maryland State Department of Education
200 West Baltimore Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21201

Re: Special Education State Complaint dated 05/10/2024

Dear Dr. Hickman:

I am writing to follow up the State Complaint I filed with you on May 10, 2024 (the Complaint). I am concerned that Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has not assigned the Complaint to qualified staff for investigation. Please note that the staff include, but not limited to, Ms. Alison Barmat, Branch Chief, Family Support/Dispute Resolution, MSDE (the Branch Chief) and you.

Earlier, the Branch Chief informed me that she believed that I didn't agree with the Individualized Education Program (IEP). I explained to the Branch Chief that that was not the allegation and allegations are clearly written in the Complaint and requested her to read the Complaint carefully.

The Branch Chief also informed me that she wished that I had requested a Due Process Hearing against the Price George's County Public Schools (the District) instead of filing the Complaint. I noted that this is from the chief of Dispute Resolution branch. I felt that the Branch Chief was attempting to create more disputes than resolving them. I understand that if I filed a Due Process Hearing request, the Branch Chief doesn't have to investigate the Complaint. If the Branch Chief is dissatisfied with her job duties, she may have a right to file a complaint with her supervisor, if she has one. If not, she may have a right to file a complaint with the Human Resources Department within the MSDE and request a different placement. She may also have a right to seek a placement outside the MSDE. I do not have authority regarding work assignments or placement for the Branch Chief. I felt that the Branch Chief was there to support her family as part of the Family Support operations of the [Branch](#).

On June 10, 2024, a month after filing of the Complaint the Branch Chief wrote a letter (the Initiation Letter) with her own allegations and dropping several allegations in the Complaint. When I explained the issues to her, she was acting as if she didn't understand the law. I am aware that she knows the [law](#). She was not even demonstrating an understanding of fundamentals of State Complaint. The Branch Chief informed me that she believes that she can add or remove allegations to a State Complaint as she wish. I reminded her that the State Complaints are filed by complainants and not by the SEA and the SEA is required to investigate all allegations in the Complaint. If the Branch Chief would like to file a State Complaint she may have a right to contact the SEA where her children are enrolled, if that is applicable. If she is removing the allegations, she needs to be removed from her position. I explained the Branch Chief about numerous issues in the Initiation Letter. I believe, she was convinced that the Initiation Letter needs to be changed. But, she insisted that she was "not going to" change the Initiation Letter. There are significant issues with the Initiation Letter.

On July 03, 2024, the Branch Chief wrote a letter to me (the Extension Letter) informing me that the MSDE was extending the timeline for completing the investigation in order to ensure a "thorough" investigation. I would like to bring to your attention that extending the timeline may not result in thorough investigation when the complaint is not assigned to qualified staff. Even after a month of filing the Complaint, a proper initiation letter was not sent.

The Branch Chief suggested that I "amend" the Complaint. I would like to notify you that there is no amendment to the Complaint as of this writing. All allegations in the Complaint need be investigated. If there is any additional information, I may provide it. Please note that the Initiation Letter has not identified all of the allegations to be investigated. I request you to refer to the Complaint instead of the Initiation Letter for the allegations to be investigated.

I would like to remind you that that federal laws and regulations prohibit recipients of Federal Financial Assistance (FFA) and public entities from taking actions, towards the Student or any of his immediate family members, to harass, intimidate, threaten, coerce or discriminate them, because I filed a complaint against you asserting the Student's right to receive FAPE and the Student's right to not being discriminated based on his disability. I request you to take proactive measures to ensure that violations described in this paragraph do not occur.

I again request you to ensure that the Complaint is processed in accordance with the IDEA and its implementing regulations complying with all procedural requirements. I also request you to provide procedures for effective implementation of corrective actions to achieve compliance as required by the IDEA and its implementing regulations.

Please contact me to confirm the receipt of this letter. If you need further information or clarification, I can be reached at the contact numbers provided in this letter.

Sincerely,



Hameed Jamarussadiq

c: Deann M. Collins, Deputy State Superintendent for Teaching and Learning
Office of Teaching and Learning, MSDE
Alison Barmat, Branch Chief, Family Support/Dispute Resolution, MSDE
Trinell Bowman, Associate Superintendent for Special Education, PGCPS