

In The Matter Of:
ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

November 10, 2022

Sharon K. Hill, CCR
(501) 680-0888

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

NOVEMBER 10, 2022

9:00 a.m.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

MS. OUIDA NEWTON, Chairman
DR. FITZGERALD HILL
MS. KATHY McFETRIDGE
MS. ADRIENNE WOODS
MR. STEVE SUTTON
MR. RANDY HENDERSON
MS. LISA HUNTER
MR. JEFF WOOD

NON-VOTING PARTICIPANTS:

MR. JOHNNY KEY, Secretary of Education
MS. JESSICA SAUM, Arkansas Teacher of the Year

DESE LEGAL COUNSEL:

MS. LORI FRENO, General Counsel

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201

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1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 1. REQUEST FOR WAIVER - LA-23-001, GENESE OBIAGA

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. On to our action
4 agenda. And the first one that we have is request
5 for a waiver. Ms. Saracini.

6 MS. SARACINI: Good morning. Karli Saracini.
7 And I'm like you, Mr. Sutton; I think we should vote
8 --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

10 MS. SARACINI: Ms. Douglas is getting the
11 educator.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

13 MS. SARACINI: They are here.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

15 MS. SARACINI: This morning, again, this is a
16 licensure action. So that we're clear, this is not
17 PLSB, but yet Ms. Douglas is part of this as well --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

19 MS. SARACINI: -- because she's legal. What we
20 have before you today is a licensure waiver. And
21 this person, because we do not have a lot of facts,
22 she will have to be asked that. Currently, they are
23 on the Child Maltreatment List. Okay. And so we
24 have no documentation of the candidate, the teacher,
25 the educator being removed at this time.

1 Am I correct in saying that, Ms. Douglas?

2 MS. DOUGLAS: Right.

3 MS. SARACINI: We -- you will have to ask her
4 specifically about the why, the when, and the how,
5 because we do not have that particular information.
6 And remember that you can look at your little handout
7 -- I think it was in your packet, the little handout
8 about the Child Maltreatment, what happens when you
9 go on the registry. They have to petition to DHS to
10 be removed from the Registry, and at this time we
11 have no documentation for that. And this happened in
12 January, so we wanted to just -- that is the facts
13 that we do have, January of 2022.

14 MS. WOODS: The allegation occurred in January
15 or that's when we found out?

16 MS. SARACINI: That's when we found out. And
17 the earliest for removal would be January of 2023,
18 that she could request removal. Because you have to
19 wait a year to be able to request the removal. I'm
20 just trying to give you the facts that we do have so
21 that you can make a decision based on the facts,
22 limited that they are, but at least you know.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

24 MS. SARACINI: Okay. So at this time --

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Let me get Ms. Freno -- a

1 couple of questions --

2 MS. SARACINI: Okay.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: -- real quick. Or I don't
4 know who I'm supposed to ask, because Ms. Douglas is
5 representing the Department. Do I need to swear
6 people in, I guess is what I'm asking?

7 MS. SARACINI: (Nodding head up and down.)

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So anyone
9 that's going to testify needs to stand and raise your
10 right hand. Okay. Do you swear or affirm that the
11 testimony you're about to give shall be the truth,
12 the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

13 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Thank you. All right.

15 MS. SARACINI: One other fact, her license is up
16 for renewal. And so going through that background
17 check process, this would also be cited.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

19 All right. You can come forward. And if you
20 don't mind, say your name so I don't butcher it.

21 MS. SARACINI: Well, that's -- I did not say
22 that as well.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

24 MS. OBIAGA: Genese Obiaga.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Obiaga. Okay.

1 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Welcome, Ms. Obiaga. Could
3 you give us some information?

4 MS. OBIAGA: In reference to -- where would you
5 like me to begin?

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Just information that would
7 help us make our decision.

8 MS. OBIAGA: This is -- it's not associated with
9 employment or students; it's a family issue. And as
10 much as she was stating that there is a lot of
11 ambiguity about it, that's similar to what I'm
12 dealing with. Family-wise, domestically, we're
13 dealing with child custody and divorce proceedings,
14 and so it's associated with that. There was an
15 allegation, which they -- a lot of that information
16 is private when it comes to who makes the allegations
17 and some of the information that is included in the
18 allegation. So I submitted a request to have the
19 records, but as of today I don't -- I did not get the
20 report. So, but the date that -- on the letter -- as
21 of the date of the letter, the actual maltreatment
22 title or heading said that I failed to provide for my
23 daughter food, clothing and shelter. And at the time
24 of the letter I and my -- her father, my spouse, were
25 still living in the same residence. So it appears to

1 be just a malicious domestic issue.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We'll see
3 if we have any questions from the Board.

4 Ms. Woods?

5 MS. WOODS: I just want to make sure that I
6 understand. So you and your husband are going
7 through a divorce?

8 MS. OBIAGA: Correct.

9 MS. WOODS: Correct. And this is a custody
10 issue that has arisen out of that divorce?

11 MS. OBIAGA: Can you repeat that?

12 MS. WOODS: So it's the allegation that has
13 arisen throughout the course of your divorce
14 proceedings. Is that correct?

15 MS. OBIAGA: Is this an ongoing thing in the
16 divorce? Is that what you're asking?

17 MS. WOODS: Yes.

18 MS. OBIAGA: No.

19 MS. WOODS: Okay. When the allegations came to
20 light, when did you get notified that you were being
21 placed on the Maltreatment Registry?

22 MS. OBIAGA: When was I notified that -- I
23 received this letter in the mail probably -- the
24 date of it, it says March 2nd. But it may have been
25 the next day or a day or so after, because it was

1 sent via mail, U.S. mail.

2 MS. WOODS: And was it your spouse or your
3 ex-husband that made the allegation against you?

4 MS. OBIAGA: I'm not aware of who made the
5 allegation. I mean, we have families; he has a
6 family, I have a family. So there is a lot with
7 that. My daughter is also going through treatment
8 for an illness. And I'm not sure if it's -- I don't
9 want to speculate. I have my personal speculations,
10 but I'll just leave it to what I do absolutely know
11 -- and that's not a lot about who made the
12 allegation.

13 MS. WOODS: Okay. But the finding was that you
14 failed to provide food, clothing and shelter?

15 MS. OBIAGA: Correct.

16 MS. WOODS: But your testimony is that you were
17 also living with your husband at the same time?

18 MS. OBIAGA: Correct. And I was providing those
19 things. My -- I was not working. I don't know if
20 that's like a -- if that's like a sarcastic way of
21 saying that I was not employed at the time. But
22 financially I had resources that I was using to
23 provide those things, not only for my daughter, I
24 have two other children that I provided those things
25 for during that time who are not mentioned at all.

1 MS. WOODS: I understand.

2 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

3 MS. WOODS: What do you teach?

4 MS. OBIAGA: What do -- my most recent -- my
5 most recent teaching position was special education.
6 I've also taught social studies; I've also taught
7 general ed.

8 MS. WOODS: Okay. And where are you employed?

9 MS. OBIAGA: My most recent place of employment
10 was Pulaski County School District.

11 MS. WOODS: Pulaski County, okay. And when did
12 you leave that?

13 MS. OBIAGA: The day that HR contacted me was
14 September 20th --

15 MS. WOODS: Of this year?

16 MS. OBIAGA: -- if I remember --

17 MS. WOODS: Okay.

18 MR. SUTTON: When did she begin teaching?

19 MS. WOODS: You can go ahead.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

21 MR. SUTTON: When did you begin teaching? How
22 long have you been teaching?

23 MS. OBIAGA: I -- my first teaching position was
24 in 2013, at Jack Robey Junior High School in Pine
25 Bluff.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Henderson?

2 MR. HENDERSON: Yes. Thank you for your
3 comments. You mentioned that you're waiting on some
4 documentation.

5 MS. OBIAGA: Correct.

6 MR. HENDERSON: What's the timeline on that?
7 And when did -- what is the time window of getting
8 that documentation?

9 MS. OBIAGA: The timeline or the stated amount
10 of time, I was not given that. I was expecting to
11 have that information available today at this
12 meeting. The day that I mailed the information, I
13 believe it was October 25th maybe or the 26th. It
14 was around that day or so. I think that was the day
15 that I purchased the money order. But I did expect
16 to have the documentation for this meeting today.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Mr. Sutton, do you have
18 another question?

19 MR. SUTTON: No. Thank you.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Ms. McFetridge?

21 MS. McFETRIDGE: I don't have any.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Wood?

23 MR. WOOD: Will you share the letter that you
24 received with us?

25 MS. OBIAGA: How? To read it or to --

1 MR. WOOD: I'm not necessarily asking you to
2 read it out-loud and, you know --

3 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

4 MR. WOOD: -- but the information in there might
5 be relevant.

6 MS. OBIAGA: Some information that's relevant,
7 it says that the Division of Children and Family
8 Services, Arkansas State Police Crimes Against
9 Children Division received an allegation of suspected
10 child maltreatment involving the above-named people,
11 which would be myself and my daughter. The incident
12 was reported January 29, 2022. So at that time I was
13 still -- we were still residing in the same
14 residence. And my daughter was recently diagnosed
15 with her illness, so we were in the hospital and in
16 the house. We would daily -- well, she was
17 hospitalized at that time, so we would take turns
18 staying in the hospital with her.

19 Is there anything else that --

20 MR. WOOD: Well --

21 MS. OBIAGA: Continue to read?

22 MR. WOOD: -- are there any specific
23 allegations?

24 MS. OBIAGA: Okay. Excuse me. The type of
25 maltreatment was neglect, failure to provide food,

1 clothing and shelter.

2 MR. WOOD: Any facts to support that allegation?

3 MS. OBIAGA: The next paragraph says if I
4 disagree with the investigative determination I may
5 request an administrative hearing. That is -- there
6 is no other facts.

7 MR. WOOD: Okay. So then did an investigator
8 contact you?

9 MS. OBIAGA: The investigator that -- her name
10 is here. It's on this letter. There was a day that
11 -- I think it was early February that she came to the
12 house. And at the time I was at the house with my
13 two older children, and she went through the house
14 and looked in the cabinets and however an
15 investigative walk-through looks like. I have never
16 participated in one of those. So it appeared that
17 she was doing those things, and that was all.

18 MR. WOOD: Did she ask you any questions?

19 MS. OBIAGA: She asked questions to my children
20 and she asked me some questions. It's been some --
21 so long ago that I can't stand here and verbatim or
22 even really paraphrase much about it, about that.
23 That's why I really was trying to get the report,
24 because I -- the information here is -- like I said,
25 it's a lot of ambiguity about it. Yes.

1 MR. WOOD: Okay. Obviously I'm concerned that
2 we have almost no information.

3 MS. OBIAGA: I am, as well.

4 MR. WOOD: I mean -- I suppose I don't have any
5 more questions at this time.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Ms. Hunter?

7 MS. WOODS: I have another question. Do you
8 enjoy teaching?

9 MS. OBIAGA: I have enjoyed teaching. I didn't
10 teach for -- during Covid. My most recent teaching
11 position, prior to Covid, I was actually employed at
12 the Pulaski County Detention Facility and that was a
13 different environment totally. And there was a lot
14 of experiences that were enjoyable when you're
15 providing education in that type of environment and
16 it's new and -- so there were some enjoyable moments
17 there. But it was a facility, a prison facility, an
18 adult prison facility, teaching juvenile offenders.
19 So it was stress and enjoyable experiences there.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Ms. Hunter?

21 MS. HUNTER: Could you just walk me through all
22 of the roles and positions that you've held since --
23 I think you said you began teaching in 2013, at Jack
24 Robey. And you mentioned a couple of other positions
25 that have been in that time. And then also highlight

1 any gaps in employment and mention why you left at
2 each place.

3 MS. OBIAGA: I taught at Jack Robey in 2013 to
4 2014; I taught civics and economics. That was my
5 first year teaching. I'm a nontraditional teaching
6 -- nontraditional teacher; I went through the APPEL
7 program. So that was my first year. A lot of
8 teachers in that program take jobs that -- in high
9 need areas. So I was -- I've always been a resident
10 of Little Rock, so I commuted to Pine Bluff. So I
11 worked there that year.

12 And I -- my older children were school age,
13 becoming school age, and so I wanted to be closer to
14 the schools that they would go to, so -- just in case
15 there was a need -- ever a need for me to leave work
16 quickly I could do that without the commute. So I
17 took a position at a charter school that next year
18 and I worked at -- I was still a nontraditional
19 teaching candidate and I had licensing requirements
20 to complete. And so I worked there as a social
21 studies -- I use the word coordinator because there
22 was one social studies teacher and I was responsible
23 for providing the social studies instruction for all
24 of the students there from 9th through 12th grade.
25 So it was whatever the social studies requirements --

1 civics, econ, U.S. history, world history,
2 psychology, any of those. So I still had to complete
3 my requirements, so I began to look for a job,
4 another position where I could complete those
5 requirements. I took a job in February of 2016, at
6 Cloverdale Middle School. And I was given a mentor
7 and he worked with me to complete my requirements and
8 to become a fully licensed teacher. And I taught
9 Arkansas history, U.S. history, and 7th grade
10 geography that year. So I worked in that two more
11 school years. I've taught U.S. -- excuse me --
12 Arkansas history again and geography. In my final
13 year at Cloverdale I taught geography. So geography
14 for three years, U.S. history for one year, Arkansas
15 history for two years.

16 After that, I took the job at Pulaski County
17 Detention. I was a general ed. teacher, meaning that
18 I would teach every subject on an online -- a virtual
19 classroom. Well, it wasn't virtual because the
20 students were in the facility, but I taught it on a
21 digital platform. And I also, because of the needs
22 of my students, I -- some of them I directed them
23 more towards GED; so I would facilitate them to
24 complete the GED requirements, and the other students
25 would be general ed.

1 In March of 2020, Covid happened and the
2 facility did not allow any -- I guess any of the
3 vendors, teachers, anybody that wasn't directly
4 employed with Pulaski County jail to enter. And so I
5 completed the school year by sending work to the
6 students. And kind of just my -- I guess he was
7 called the liaison, he would take the work to the
8 facility and they would complete the work and they
9 would return the work to me.

10 And I didn't work at a location from March of
11 2020, until my most recent place of employment with
12 Pulaski County Special School District, at Robinson
13 Middle School, and I was a special education teacher
14 there.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Okay.

16 SECRETARY KEY: You said your letter said that
17 you could request an administrative hearing?

18 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

19 SECRETARY KEY: Had -- did you do that?

20 MS. OBIAGA: Not in the way that I guess it's
21 stating here. I went to the actual DHS facility.
22 There was -- there was someone who came to the house
23 on a few occasions and I asked to meet -- well, she
24 called me and she asked about -- because during this
25 time we're still going through divorce proceedings.

1 So by the time of March, I was no longer living in
2 the home and so -- but my daughter was still living
3 there. And so she contacted me to ask some
4 information, "where are you staying." And I went
5 there and I asked for assistance on how to proceed,
6 and it just wasn't the most pleasurable or helpful
7 experience. And so I was asked several -- I asked
8 several times for assistance doing this and there was
9 money associated with it. Ten dollars doesn't sound
10 like a lot, but you are going through a divorce and
11 you have other children and then you have a child who
12 -- because now you're living in two different
13 residences and you still -- you are still providing
14 at a certain level, that -- I didn't have access to
15 that. And however trivial that may seem, that's the
16 facts. And so I asked the ways to do it; they were
17 just really not helpful with that.

18 In addition to that, I never really bought into
19 the -- this allegation, because it's not true.

20 SECRETARY KEY: So, Ms. Obiaga, that's why the
21 hearing would be --

22 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

23 SECRETARY KEY: -- important, because that was
24 your opportunity or would be your opportunity to
25 present evidence. Without that, it's very difficult

1 for this board to take an action on your request here
2 today. So I know you didn't come asking for ideas or
3 suggestions, but I really do think it would be in
4 your best interest to contact DHS/DCFS and ask about
5 that administrative hearing.

6 MS. OBIAGA: I've done that. Yes.

7 SECRETARY KEY: Okay.

8 MS. OBIAGA: I have since done that, if that's a
9 question, and -- but prior to this going on the
10 record, the day that I said I went to DHS I asked for
11 assistance with that and I was given none, exactly
12 what I just explained. And after that, when I said I
13 never really bought into it, that means I didn't
14 check into it any more after that until -- and so
15 that's why I went and applied for a job and was
16 pretty much surprised -- like, okay, so this is
17 really on there, and the fact that they would allow
18 it to go on there. And it's malicious and it's
19 always been malicious. But, I mean, there are
20 processes, but during this entire time I'm also going
21 through divorce proceedings; so I'm going to court
22 with that.

23 I was going through -- I didn't plan on standing
24 here and talking about a personal domestic matter.
25 And I don't think that this was the venue to do that.

1 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah, we agree.

2 And, Ms. Saracini, let me ask this question for
3 the purpose of the Board.

4 MS. SARACINI: Uh-huh.

5 SECRETARY KEY: Can this board delay action on
6 this --

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

8 SECRETARY KEY: -- until Ms. Obiaga has
9 additional information or whatever happens at a
10 hearing or other action that she might pursue before
11 they would actually have to take action on this?

12 MS. SARACINI: Well, unless the waiver is
13 granted you shall revoke, suspend or place on
14 probation the existing license. And this occurred
15 when she pursued a new position with Pulaski County
16 in the fall, and so when the background check came
17 up, as she stated, that's when the hit occurred, and
18 then this process started.

19 When we talk about that, if you revoke the
20 license you can automatically, once she goes before
21 the DHS board, and assume it's removed from that,
22 then her license can be immediately reinstated.

23 Does that make sense?

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So this is a different type of
25 revocation. If it were revoked, then she -- if she

1 goes through the hearing and it's removed, then she
2 can come back and it -- would she have to come back
3 to us for it to be reinstated?

4 MS. SARACINI: I don't think so. But, Ms.
5 Douglas, --

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

7 MS. SARACINI: -- can you speak --

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

9 MS. SARACINI: -- to that better than I?

10 MS. DOUGLAS: If you were to revoke her license
11 -- revoke or suspend, however you prefer to do it,
12 her license is only valid through the end of this
13 year. So that makes it a little bit --

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

15 MS. DOUGLAS: -- quirky in that she's up for
16 renewal. You could revoke her license and then put a
17 clause in there that states -- and vote to state if
18 she provides documentation that she has been removed
19 from the registry that her license can automatically
20 be reinstated without coming back before the Board.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So we just have to make
22 that part of the motion then?

23 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

25 MR. WOOD: May I ask a question about that?

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

2 MR. WOOD: What would the effect be if that
3 reinstatement were available to occur in, say,
4 February next year, after the date for her renewal
5 has passed?

6 MS. DOUGLAS: She would just then do all the
7 steps that are required for renewal.

8 MR. WOOD: Okay.

9 MS. DOUGLAS: This would just be a non-issue.

10 MR. WOOD: Okay.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Any other questions
12 from the Board? Do you have any questions for Ms.
13 Obiaga or Ms. Douglas?

14 MR. WOOD: I'm sorry. I guess I do have one
15 more question --

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

17 MR. WOOD: -- procedurally. What's the
18 difference between revoke and suspend in a situation
19 like that?

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Douglas.

21 MS. DOUGLAS: The sanction is essentially the
22 same in that you can't be in a classroom. But as far
23 as the suspension goes, you typically suspend for a
24 period of time that the license is valid. In her
25 case, her license is only valid through the end of

1 the year, so suspending it outside of its validity
2 doesn't really make much sense. So you could revoke
3 it and it could be reinstated and that covers any gap
4 in time of it not being valid, if that makes sense.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: If we suspend it, then that
6 clause would not --

7 MS. DOUGLAS: The difference is you're going to
8 have to suspend it indefinitely --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

10 MS. DOUGLAS: -- because you don't know when --

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

12 MS. DOUGLAS: -- potentially she could get
13 reinstated.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right. Okay.

15 MS. DOUGLAS: So the cleaner way to do that
16 would be to revoke it and allow the clause that if
17 she were to get removed that she can be immediately
18 reinstated.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Does that
20 make sense to everyone?

21 Ms. Saum.

22 MS. SAUM: Is there a financial implication with
23 revoking and suspending? Would it be -- would it
24 cost her money to reinstate with revocation versus
25 suspension?

1 MS. DOUGLAS: (Shaking head from side to side.)

2 MS. SAUM: Okay. That's what I wanted to know

3 --

4 MS. DOUGLAS: No, it would not.

5 MS. SAUM: -- that it wasn't financially going
6 to punish one way or the other. Thank you.

7 MS. SARACINI: It would be the same process with
8 a \$75 fee with renewal of license.

9 MS. WOODS: I just want to make sure, was there
10 a date that you were supposed to have requested your
11 hearing by in that letter?

12 MS. OBIAGA: The date of the letter?

13 MS. WOODS: No. So in your letter, I'm trying
14 to find out if there was a time period in which you
15 had to request or otherwise it was considered waived.

16 MS. OBIAGA: It said in this letter 30 days from
17 the date of the letter.

18 MS. WOODS: And you received that letter when?

19 MS. OBIAGA: March 2nd.

20 MS. WOODS: So we're past the time period.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Have you requested a hearing?

22 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: And have you heard back
24 anything from that?

25 MS. OBIAGA: I did everything that I was

1 supposed to do, including request the report. I
2 don't have the report. So the recommendations that
3 have just been presented all appear to continue the
4 very thing that I am basically saying is a malicious
5 attack from whomever. And being -- not being able to
6 work -- if I -- not being able to work. And it is a
7 personal -- excuse me -- a family issue. But because
8 of my profession, something that -- I still am with
9 my daughter daily, I still visit with my daughter on
10 other days, and I provide those things for her, which
11 I have always provided those things for her. That's
12 the factual information. This is speculative, but is
13 allowed to be submitted as fact. And me not being
14 able to work in my profession, which I've invested
15 time as well as money -- the APPEL program is a self-
16 pay program.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Ms. Douglas, I have a
18 question for you. If she has missed the deadline for
19 a hearing, what would be a procedure for her from
20 that point?

21 MS. DOUGLAS: So now she would have to only
22 submit to be removed off of the Registry.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

24 MS. DOUGLAS: Her appeal process for the initial
25 placement on the Registry, that appeal process to

1 have a hearing on that is past. So after being on
2 the Registry for one year she can petition to be
3 removed from the Registry, and that would be January
4 of 2023.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

6 MS. DOUGLAS: And you get to -- if that is
7 denied, you have to wait another year.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So in January she could
9 petition to be removed. And so that would be --
10 instead of putting it in a motion -- if that's the
11 Board's pleasure, instead of putting in there about
12 the hearing, it would be the removal?

13 MS. DOUGLAS: Right. So if she provides
14 documentation that she has been removed from the
15 Registry, then you could reinstate.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Any other
17 questions from board members?

18 MR. HENDERSON: I guess for my own
19 clarification, am I correct in hearing the
20 certification expires December? So if you factor in
21 the holidays, we're talking about this in a few weeks
22 now. So I guess what I'm asking is if we choose to
23 suspend or revoke, what's the difference on the
24 license expiring [sic]? So --

25 MS. SARACINI: It's my understanding -- and Ms.

1 Douglas will back me up -- because she's come before
2 and asked for a waiver you have to act on the waiver.
3 Because unless the waiver is granted it's
4 automatically revoked, suspended.

5 Am I saying that correctly, by the statute, by
6 our rules?

7 MS. DOUGLAS: Correct. So because this is a
8 disqualifying offense, you either have to grant a
9 waiver or deny a waiver. You can grant a waiver with
10 conditions, which we have done in the past, and that
11 would be we're going to -- the waiver is that we're
12 going to revoke your license conditioned -- it will
13 stay revoked until you can provide documentation that
14 you have been reinstated -- that you are no longer on
15 the Registry, and then automatically can reinstate
16 that license. And then anything that's pending as
17 far as her licensure renewal would just be normal
18 stuff that she has to go through.

19 MS. WOODS: So to make sure I understand, if we
20 -- let's just say we do nothing --

21 MS. DOUGLAS: Right.

22 MS. WOODS: -- and she gets taken off, the only
23 difference is if we had granted something it would be
24 automatic versus her having to reapply?

25 MS. DOUGLAS: Right. So if you do nothing -- so

1 you can't do nothing.

2 MS. WOODS: Right.

3 MS. DOUGLAS: So that's not even an option.

4 MS. WOODS: If this had not come here --

5 MS. DOUGLAS: Right.

6 MS. WOODS: -- would she just have to reapply?

7 Or if I were to -- let's say we approve or deny --

8 MS. DOUGLAS: Right.

9 MS. WOODS: -- it would just automatically
10 happen?

11 MS. DOUGLAS: Right. So because you have the
12 disqualifying offense, the Board has to take an
13 action. And so she is denied -- so I guess if the
14 Board doesn't take an action she's just flat-out
15 denied and cannot work in an education entity.

16 MS. OBIAGA: Can I -- I have a question.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

18 MS. OBIAGA: In addition to that, there is
19 documentation reputation-wise, career-wise. And
20 according -- attached to my teaching history with
21 this process, if no action is taken, or the license
22 is revoked or suspended.

23 MS. DOUGLAS: Is there a question?

24 MS. OBIAGA: That's the question. Yes.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Would there be something

1 attached to her license if it's revoked?

2 MS. DOUGLAS: If she's denied -- I mean, she's
3 denied. She can't work in an education entity.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I guess what her question is,
5 would it be permanently attached to -- if she was
6 ever reinstated, would this be permanently attached
7 to her record?

8 MS. DOUGLAS: No. It would -- once reinstated,
9 it's not longer revoked; it's reinstated and you move
10 on. The waiver was granted.

11 MS. OBIAGA: But is that in the record? That's
12 the question. Whenever you apply for educational
13 jobs, which I have applied for jobs during this time,
14 a lot of the questions on applications state, "Have
15 you ever had a license suspended or revoked."

16 MS. DOUGLAS: The answer would be yes.

17 MS. OBIAGA: Correct, if that was the case.

18 MS. DOUGLAS: Right.

19 MS. OBIAGA: But that is the issue. This is,
20 again, not reflective of my -- not reflective of my
21 teaching, it's not associated with any school or my
22 students; it is supposedly with my daughter whom I --
23 it's not true, and I constantly have denied these
24 facts. And it's not even a personal denial of those
25 facts; these facts are easily observable.

1 MS. DOUGLAS: So the way that the law is written
2 it says if you are on the Child Maltreatment Registry
3 and you are up for renewal they shall not renew a
4 license based on someone that has a true finding on
5 the Child Maltreatment Registry. They shall revoke,
6 suspend or place on probation that license if they
7 would like for it to be -- the waiver to be granted.
8 But the law says it doesn't -- the law does not
9 require the Maltreatment Registry to be something
10 that happens at a school or in a classroom; it just
11 simply says if you are on the Registry that is enough
12 and you should be revoked.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

14 Dr. Hill, I didn't give you an opportunity.

15 DR. HILL: No.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Anyone -- and I see Dr.
17 Moore's name up there. I'm not sure if she's online
18 or not. Dr. Moore, did you have a --

19 (MOMENT OF SILENCE)

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

21 MR. WOOD: I guess I have a question --

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Mr. Wood, go ahead.

23 MR. WOOD: -- about the procedure of this. Is
24 it within our authority to grant the waiver request
25 even if she continues to be on the Child Maltreatment

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Registry?

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

MR. WOOD: So it would be our judgment of whether or not the alleged offense, the suspicion of that, to prohibit her from continuing to work in an educational institution?

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

MR. WOOD: Okay. So I'll just say this. As a member of the Little Rock School Board, I was a pretty hard no on most waiver requests when noncertified employees would come and ask. And I did allow -- I mean consider the circumstances and would, you know, from time to time would understand extenuating circumstances. In my experience, it rarely involved what I would -- it was more direct than this. This failure to provide food, clothing and shelter seems a little different than striking a child or direct abuse. I'm not commenting on which -- I'm not saying the failure to provide food, clothing and shelter is less offensive, but I guess I'm kind of saying that accidentally.

I would like to hear from any members of the Board that would make an argument that such an offense shouldn't disqualify someone from teaching in a school. If it was striking a child, if it was

1 direct harsh abuse, I wouldn't be very interested in
2 a conversation. But if someone has an argument to
3 make that that type of offense could be overlooked
4 with supervision or whatever, then I would be up for
5 hearing it as I consider my position on this.

6 Can I get Ms. Douglas to answer one question
7 before we do that?

8 MR. WOOD: Okay.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Douglas, you said deny,
10 revoke or grant the waiver. But you also said
11 probation. What would that mean if that was
12 considered?

13 MS. DOUGLAS: You could put her license on a
14 probationary status.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: But would she -- if she's up
16 for renewal in December, then would she be able to go
17 through the renewal process?

18 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes. Yes. She doesn't -- a
19 probation does not prevent you from being in the
20 classroom.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So she would be able to
22 renew if we were to do the probation?

23 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Now let's
25 get someone to comment on what Mr. Wood said.

1 MR. SUTTON: Jeff, this is -- any of these true
2 finding cases -- and this obviously is my opinion --
3 is so difficult because we have no information from
4 DHS. There's a fallacy in this whole process. I
5 don't know if it needs to be overturned by the
6 Legislature or what. But how we can -- we hear one
7 side of it, and that's her side -- and it may be the
8 right side -- but it really puts us in a tough spot.
9 She's in a tough spot because of this whole process
10 -- and I'm not saying -- again, I'm not judging
11 whether it's true or not true. It's frustrating to
12 me. I mean, I can't -- I can't tell you -- I can't
13 support an argument one way or the other. It's
14 doggone ridiculous that we have -- you know, DHS
15 hides behind a screen and we have to make decisions.

16 MS. HUNTER: I would tend to agree with you, I
17 mean, because it seems that just an accusation can
18 leave you on the list. And it is unfortunate that
19 there wasn't a hearing to get to the bottom of it and
20 truly understand so that we can deal with all the
21 facts.

22 MS. WOODS: Just on the negative feedback,
23 here's my heartburn with all of this. And I don't --
24 I don't know if I feel like you care one way or the
25 other how this pans out, and that may just be

1 something on my part. You wouldn't be here if you --
2 obviously if you didn't care. Did you -- and I'm
3 just -- do you what Legal Aid is? Have you followed
4 up with them to be your representation?

5 MS. OBIAGA: No, I didn't.

6 MS. WOODS: Okay. Just -- I know that trying to
7 get off of the Maltreatment Registry -- this is not
8 the first one of these that we've seen, and we've
9 talked to a lot of people about trying -- the process
10 to get off. And so I understand telling you if we
11 were going to revoke it and say, "Go get off the
12 Maltreatment Registry," that could be a year or more,
13 I mean, to be very fair. And so I struggle with
14 that. But at the same time, I'm also like if my
15 license were on the line I would have made sure I got
16 my hearing. And I understand you think that these
17 allegations are just made-up, and so therefore you're
18 like I'm not going to give it the time of day because
19 I need to focus my energy elsewhere.

20 MS. OBIAGA: No, I don't think you have a clear
21 picture of exactly what happened. This information
22 was presented to me in September. And September 21st
23 till today I've been actively working to make sure
24 that I was able to present an accurate depiction of
25 what happened. This is two different entities. At

1 the time of these allegations from Child Maltreatment
2 I was not working as an educator, so there was not
3 even the idea to come to the Department of Education
4 in reference to it. So from September, when HR came
5 to me, I'm actively, weekly or daily, doing something
6 to address these issues. So I don't know exactly --
7 when you say I don't care, that's difficult to
8 process in reference to education or providing for
9 your children, especially when the allegations
10 include failure to provide for your children. So
11 most definitely that's something that I care a lot
12 about that.

13 MS. WOODS: And that wasn't my insinuation, and
14 I apologize if that's -- no, what I was saying is if
15 I would have gotten that letter in March I would have
16 taken the active steps to get my hearing. And it
17 wasn't until September when it -- basically, you
18 testified that it came to light and you were like,
19 oh, something actually came of this. That's where
20 I'm at.

21 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions on this?

22 Ms. Saum.

23 MS. SAUM: If the waiver is granted, would you
24 be able to return to employment at Pulaski County
25 immediately? Is that something the district decides

1 or --

2 MS. OBIAGA: That was the conversation with HR
3 at the time, is they -- they gave me a letter that
4 stated that I was able to -- and it's in my file that
5 I could apply for any job that I'm qualified to apply
6 for. And the specific job, my building principal
7 stated that I was welcome to come back to that job.

8 MS. SAUM: Okay.

9 MR. SUTTON: Have you requested -- I'm sorry.
10 Have you requested any letters of reference from
11 prior employers or current employers? If you
12 haven't, I strongly suggest that you do that to help
13 your case. You know, this side of my brain tells me
14 that this is from a domestic dispute, your divorce
15 proceedings, what-have-you -- malicious, as you say
16 -- and I hear you say that it didn't spill over into
17 the classroom, and there's certainly no facts to
18 that, in that regard. As pertains to future
19 employment and obtaining a license, you need -- if I
20 were you, I would paper up with recommendations to
21 show that it didn't spill over, I mean it hasn't
22 affected your job performance. But that's my
23 recommendation to you. If you don't see any
24 importance in that --

25 MS. OBIAGA: No.

1 MR. SUTTON: -- then that's fine. I'm telling
2 you --

3 MS. OBIAGA: No. It's --

4 MR. SUTTON: -- it makes a difference.

5 MS. OBIAGA: No. It's not that I don't see the
6 importance. I'm trying to process exactly -- the
7 time -- you are aware that I just -- school started
8 in August, and so I worked at that particular job
9 from August till September. And so those -- that --
10 my experience there, that's who I have the ability to
11 ask for some type of reference from. What -- are you
12 suggesting that someone who --

13 MR. SUTTON: Go back to every -- go back to
14 everybody that you've worked for and just say, "Look,
15 you know, I've got to go before the DHS. You know,
16 this is affecting my ability to work and obtain my
17 license." It's just kind of commonsense. You need
18 to get -- you know, try to stack some of the odds in
19 your favor.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

21 MR. SUTTON: It's just a suggestion.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

23 MS. OBIAGA: I hear what you're saying.

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other comments?

25 Ms. Hunter.

1 MS. HUNTER: So do we have the option to grant
2 the waiver subject to like, for example, active
3 pursuit to be removed from the Registry?

4 MS. SARACINI: (Shaking head from side to side.)

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: No.

6 MS. WOODS: My understanding from previous ones,
7 if we grant it in whole and there's nothing we can
8 further say about it.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Unless it was a probation --
10 would probation have stipulations, Ms. Douglas?

11 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes. You could put some
12 stipulations on it. I don't know how you would
13 police active pursuit of DHS removal. I don't know
14 how you could quantify that or even measure it, what
15 would need to be provided.

16 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Would you give a time period
17 that in X number of years the removal had to occur, I
18 mean, or --

19 MS. DOUGLAS: You could. So, you know, Ms.
20 Obiaga didn't have a hearing. She's on the Registry.
21 All she can do is petition to be removed from the
22 Registry. She can only do that once per year. So
23 you could -- I mean you have several options. You
24 can table this to see if she gets removed -- in the
25 meantime, her license will not be renewed, he would

1 not be able to work because she will be denied in the
2 system -- and have her come back in February and
3 update you and provide information. And I don't know
4 if the Board is aware -- I think that the factors
5 that you're supposed to consider are the educator's
6 age at the time of the offense, the circumstances
7 surrounding the offense, length of time since the
8 offense, educator's subsequent work history,
9 educator's employment character reference, and other
10 evidence demonstrating an applicant does not pose a
11 threat to health or safety of school children or
12 personnel.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. And you understand
14 those last two things that she just read are what Mr.
15 Sutton was alluding to, that we don't have the
16 evidence as far as classroom experience and classroom
17 -- what happens in your classroom. So that was what
18 Mr. Sutton was trying to tell you; that is something
19 that we also consider.

20 Any other --

21 DR. HILL: Ms. Newton?

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

23 DR. HILL: And the probationary response, as a
24 principle, what would you be comfortable -- I mean,
25 based on -- and I don't mean to put you on the spot.

1 But I understand everything that everybody is saying,
2 and then -- but there is subjective nature going on
3 here --

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

5 DR. HILL: -- in a very unspecified way.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

7 DR. HILL: And this is her livelihood. And the
8 probationary with more information -- 90 days come
9 back to see if it may be fair or -- but from a
10 standpoint of protecting children --

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Sure.

12 DR. HILL: -- which is our priority --

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

14 DR. HILL: -- which is our responsibility.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Absolutely.

16 DR. HILL: And I think as our board chair and
17 from the classroom, which you have more experience,
18 do you have a comfort level one way or the other
19 before somebody makes a recommendation and we vote?

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I understand what Mr. Wood was
21 saying a while ago, that this was something that
22 happened in a home. But the thing that bothers me a
23 little bit about it is I don't have anything as far
24 as evidence of what happened in her classrooms. and
25 so that's the turmoil that I have with that. You

1 know, all we've got is this one sheet of paper and
2 the allegation, and we don't have anything from
3 principals, coworkers, parents; we don't have
4 anything like that as far as what actually happened
5 in this school. And you heard what Ms. Douglas read
6 as far as what we consider, and so that's the part
7 that I'm comfortable with there.

8 MR. SUTTON: Did I understand, Ms. Douglas, that
9 one of the things we can do is table it, table this
10 until -- and revisit after she has made her appeal
11 before DHS?

12 MS. DOUGLAS: Yeah, you have that ability as a
13 board. I just -- I don't know what the timeline on
14 that will be, so I couldn't give you a date on when
15 to revisit it. She can petition in January of 2023,
16 to get removed off the Registry.

17 SECRETARY KEY: Yeah. I think that timeline may
18 be too long. I think the timeline of tabling -- I
19 mean, if you table it till December that will give
20 her time to go back to the building principals that
21 she worked for to see if she can put together this --
22 the support that would help y'all make a decision.
23 Right now, I'm not sure how you have enough
24 information really to make a decision one way or the
25 other. And I know it's another month, but it's a

1 month that might be well worth the time for both Ms.
2 Obiaga and for this board.

3 MS. DOUGLAS: Potentially, she could have the
4 full report from DHS by then that she could provide
5 you all so that you have more of the facts
6 surrounding about how she landed on the Registry to
7 begin with. I understand that maybe her position on
8 that is -- I don't know that -- you don't have that
9 report at this time. Right?

10 MS. OBIAGA: Not today, no.

11 MS. DOUGLAS: Okay. And you thought you would
12 have it by now, but you don't. Correct?

13 MS. OBIAGA: Yes.

14 MS. DOUGLAS: Okay. And so then she could
15 provide that for you all to have an understanding at
16 least what DHS is saying as to why she's on the
17 Registry. I know that she has some disagreement with
18 some of that, but she doesn't have a report here. So
19 she could provide that to you, along with character
20 references, any kind of work, or anything that you
21 might want to consider to make an informed decision.

22 MS. OBIAGA: Would a teacher with -- teaching as
23 long as I have been teaching, if my professional
24 aptitude was in question there would be -- also be
25 documentation in that respect as well. I would have

1 been written up; I would have been suspended for
2 days. Those are things that -- and I don't -- those
3 things -- I've never had those issues.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: But, you see, we don't have
5 any evidence one way or the other.

6 MS. OBIAGA: Correct. But those things are --
7 most of those things are kind of -- are those things
8 that are accessible, publicly accessible things like
9 that in your public folder.

10 MS. DOUGLAS: No. Those are not held in the
11 licensure folder. You would have to contact previous
12 administrators and ask them to write you a
13 documentation, or HR, to say can you provide an
14 update or a synopsis of my work experience with this
15 district to show that I was not written up or
16 received any disciplinary action.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

18 MR. HENDERSON: Just to make sure I'm clear, Ms.
19 Douglas, you did say if we decide -- as a board
20 decide to table this that she will be unable to work
21 until February? Did I hear that correctly?

22 MS. DOUGLAS: No.

23 MR. HENDERSON: Okay.

24 MS. DOUGLAS: So if you table it till next
25 month, she -- she cannot work until a waiver is

1 granted.

2 MR. HENDERSON: Gotcha.

3 MS. DOUGLAS: So if a waiver is never granted,
4 she can never work.

5 MR. HENDERSON: Okay.

6 MS. DOUGLAS: So she -- because this is a
7 disqualifying offense, she is denied and ineligible
8 to be employed in an educational entity. So the only
9 way that she can go back to work in a district is to
10 get the waiver granted. If you table it to next
11 month for her to provide more information, then you
12 can make a better decision on if you feel comfortable
13 granting that waiver.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

15 DR. HILL: So that's what the Secretary --
16 that's what you're basically recommending, the
17 action, and more information before we make a
18 decision?

19 SECRETARY KEY: However you want to accept it,
20 as a recommendation --

21 DR. HILL: Right.

22 SECRETARY KEY: -- or suggestion.

23 DR. HILL: Yes, that's what I meant. Yeah.

24 SECRETARY KEY: Yes. And it's --

25 DR. HILL: Because we want to be fair to

1 everyone, on both sides.

2 SECRETARY KEY: Sure. Yes.

3 MR. WOOD: Can I ask, what's the difference
4 between that and denying the waiver subject to
5 removal from the Child Maltreatment Registry?

6 SECRETARY KEY: I think, from my perspective,
7 denying it means you've accepted the fact that being
8 on the Registry just prohibits her from being in a
9 classroom.

10 MR. WOOD: Right. And I guess that goes to the
11 nature of my question a minute ago, and I haven't
12 heard an argument to suggest that denying food,
13 clothing and shelter to one's child is not a
14 prohibitive action to keep someone out of the
15 classroom. Let's assume it's all false. Okay.
16 Whatever DHS's finding was, she's going to say --
17 whenever she brings the file in, she's going to say
18 this isn't true. So we're going to believe DHS or
19 we're going to believe her. If we choose to believe
20 her, then we should grant the waiver. If we're going
21 to believe DHS, then we have to decide does it rise
22 to the level of keeping an educator out of the
23 classroom. And I guess that's what I'm -- I would
24 welcome someone trying to convince me that denying
25 food, clothing and shelter is not prohibitive of

1 being a good educator. I tend to gravitate towards
2 if you'll do that to your own child, I think the
3 parents may have concerns about your custody and care
4 of their children for six to eight hours a day. And
5 I would not want to have to answer to those parents.
6 But, again, I'm open to being convinced that that's
7 not prohibitive. If we can't make that argument,
8 then I would suggest that we -- I would be prepared
9 to make a motion to deny the waiver request subject
10 to the removal from the Maltreatment Registry and let
11 her do the work necessary to convince DHS that she
12 should not be on the Maltreatment Registry.

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

14 MS. WOODS: I think my other condition would be
15 -- I know whatever we find in that report is
16 personal; it has nothing to do with your teaching
17 ability, which is where I'm back to Mr. Sutton's
18 point. Having letters of recommendation that speak
19 to your character, which is an actual element that we
20 need to consider, is not on the table yet. And so
21 bringing those back in a month would be helpful for
22 us.

23 MS. OBIAGA: Correct.

24 MS. WOODS: You're not the first teacher we have
25 seen before us asking for a waiver, but a lot of them

1 have brought school recommendation letters from
2 former colleagues, their current administration
3 speaking to their teaching abilities. And I would
4 say we're pretty generous as a board when it comes to
5 waivers. But right now we -- there's at least two
6 elements that Ms. Douglas brought up that we can't
7 even consider because we just don't have it, being
8 letters speaking to your character.

9 MS. OBIAGA: And I would say that my situation
10 may very well be unique because I did not work during
11 Covid. I've not been employed -- well, excuse me --
12 I worked during Covid, the year that ended school
13 year 2020. In 2021, I did not work and I -- at a
14 school, and I began the job at Pulaski County in
15 August of this year. My relationships with previous
16 administrators, I don't necessarily have connections
17 to them. They -- when I did my job -- teaching can
18 be a job -- teaching is a profession that a lot of
19 times you are engrossed in doing your work and
20 providing for your students. And when it comes to an
21 administrator you have assistant principals/
22 administrators; you have other people. But the
23 people that you go to in this -- even my most recent
24 jobs, they have -- it's so much change-up. So I'm --
25 the issue is that this is a domestic issue and I'm

1 still going to court for those things. I'm still
2 tasked with providing for this child and other
3 children. And the way that I have invested, I'm
4 saying again, to provide for my children, that has
5 been -- is attempting to be removed because of a
6 domestic issue that had nothing to do with my work
7 history and abilities. And so with me being able to
8 -- even tabling it for a month is still punitive to
9 me, me being able to provide and even deal with the
10 domestic issues. That -- it takes finances to be
11 able to do those things. Even legal services that
12 you recommended they require payment; that's -- it's
13 not a free service. So all of these things, these
14 suggestions, well-intended, employment is what
15 prepares me to be able to do any of those things and
16 which is something that I was already aware of.
17 Which is why I invested -- again, I'm saying -- into
18 the APPEL program to be a licensed educator.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Any other
20 questions from the Board?

21 Okay. I think we are ready for a motion. The
22 motion -- Ms. Douglas, you're going to help me out
23 here. The motion could be to grant the waiver, deny
24 the waiver, or probation. Is that correct?

25 MS. DOUGLAS: It's to grant the waiver or deny

1 the waiver. And --

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There's no probation then?

3 MS. DOUGLAS: You can do probation. If you
4 grant the waiver, you can do conditions on the
5 waiver.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right.

7 MS. DOUGLAS: And probation could be a
8 condition.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. So it's
10 grant or deny the waiver then would be our motion
11 then.

12 Okay. What is the pleasure of the Board?

13 MR. WOOD: Well, I'll make a motion.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

15 MR. WOOD: I'll move to deny the waiver request
16 but allow reinstatement of the license upon removal
17 of her name from the Child Maltreatment Registry.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Mr.
19 Wood to deny the waiver but allow reinstatement upon
20 removal from the Child Maltreatment Registry.

21 MS. WOODS: I'll second.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: We have a second by Ms. Woods.
23 We probably need to do a roll-call here.

24 DR. HILL: Can I ask a question?

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Uh-huh.

1 DR. HILL: Does that mean that we won't have
2 more information next month?

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Right.

4 SECRETARY KEY: Mr. Sutton.

5 MR. SUTTON: Yes.

6 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Hunter.

7 MS. HUNTER: Yes.

8 SECRETARY KEY: Mr. Wood.

9 MR. WOOD: Yes.

10 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. McFetridge.

11 MS. McFETRIDGE: Yes.

12 SECRETARY KEY: Ms. Woods.

13 MS. WOODS: Yes.

14 SECRETARY KEY: Dr. Hill.

15 DR. HILL: No.

16 SECRETARY KEY: Mr. Henderson.

17 MR. HENDERSON: No.

18 SECRETARY KEY: We have five yeas, two nays.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Motion passes.

20 So, Ms. Obiaga, you'll need to go and try to get
21 yourself off the Registry and then you can get your
22 reinstatement.

23 Ms. Douglas, I have a couple of questions for
24 you before we move off of this. I know we've had
25 this situation before and we talked about the lack of

1 information from DHS. And we were going to try to do
2 some things behind the scenes to try to get that
3 where this wouldn't keep occurring. What -- how is
4 that process going?

5 MS. DOUGLAS: We do have some contacts with DHS.
6 Typically we are asking the applicant to provide that
7 information because it's their personal information,
8 it's their situation. There are some laws also about
9 us providing those types of documents that could get
10 us in trouble with audits and with state and federal
11 government. So that's why we're asking the educators
12 to get those documentations because they are entitled
13 to it and then to provide it to you as a board.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So that's the process
15 that's going to have to go from here on?

16 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Is that something that could
18 be addressed legislatively or would federal also
19 still get into that?

20 MS. DOUGLAS: The federal law would still
21 prohibit the sharing.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

23 MS. DOUGLAS: But it's become our position too
24 that if the applicant is seeking a waiver then they
25 would want to provide you guys with that information,

1 one way or the other. I mean, DHS does their
2 investigation; they make a finding by a preponderance
3 of the evidence, which is a more likely than not
4 standard and -- before they actually put them on the
5 Registry.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So the educator would have to
7 go to DHS, get that report, and then bring it back to
8 us?

9 MS. DOUGLAS: Correct.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

11 MS. DOUGLAS: And we are asking them to do that
12 when they request a hearing, to provide you guys with
13 more information.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. So she knew that she
15 needed to bring in that report to us?

16 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

18 DR. HILL: Can I have one to follow up on that?
19 I know when there are committee inquiries based on
20 things from the community, the ethics investigative
21 team goes down to the communities and does research
22 and brings back recommendations to this board.

23 MS. DOUGLAS: Uh-huh.

24 DR. HILL: Do we do that on -- or do we just
25 take DHS's --

1 MS. DOUGLAS: The law requires us just to take
2 DHS's report and their findings. So the law
3 specifically states that you shall revoke if they
4 have a true finding. So a legislative change could
5 prevent that --

6 DR. HILL: That's okay.

7 MS. DOUGLAS: -- but it also gives you guys the
8 opportunity to waive that.

9 DR. HILL: I gotcha. Okay.

10 MS. DOUGLAS: And so that's kind of giving you
11 the caveat of, yes, he shall revoke, but you do have
12 the option to waive the offense and give the -- and
13 kind of disregard whatever DHS has suggested.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Yeah. And before you
15 leave, Ms. Douglas, again, we want to say thank you
16 for all that you've done for us. And I hope you've
17 trained someone well, because you know how many
18 questions we have. So thank you for all that you do.

19 MR. WOOD: I don't want to put a wet blanket on
20 what she just said about you personally. I do have a
21 question about the process though. What kind of work
22 is done with the waiver applicant, with the educator
23 that comes, prior to showing up? It seems as though
24 -- you know, this is my first one.

25 MS. DOUGLAS: Sure.

1 MR. WOOD: Okay. And so I have no idea what
2 they normally come with. Do they normally come with
3 a portfolio of --

4 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

5 MR. WOOD: -- why they should be --

6 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

7 MR. WOOD: -- granted the waiver?

8 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

9 MR. WOOD: Because I was surprised today by the
10 lack of anything.

11 MS. DOUGLAS: I requested character references,
12 things of that nature, and was told that it was a
13 personal matter and she did not feel comfortable
14 requesting character references.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah. Yeah.

16 MS. DOUGLAS: Specifically, we give them a list
17 of factors that you guys will consider and say,
18 "These are the things that they're going to consider,
19 so you need to provide documentation on all of these
20 things to give you guys a better idea of what you're
21 waiving."

22 MS. WOODS: Have you gotten the handout that
23 their office created? We have gone through this and
24 so there is a handout that Ms. Saracini -- do you
25 have it?

1 MS. DOUGLAS: The green one?

2 MS. WOODS: The green one, yes.

3 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes, I do.

4 MS. WOODS: So there's the PLSB stuff and then
5 there's these. PLSB is well documented, that one is
6 not. But it's a very helpful handout.

7 MS. DOUGLAS: It's in your -- it's in the
8 documentation for today, in that packet. But, yeah,
9 we'll get it -- we'll get it uploaded into your
10 folders so you always have it.

11 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anything else on this before
12 we move on?

13 Thank you, Ms. Douglas.

14 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: These are painful but we
16 appreciate your work.

17 MS. DOUGLAS: Thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right.

19 MR. SUTTON: Will you be here next month?

20 Is she leaving this month --

21 MS. DOUGLAS: Not quite.

22 MR. SUTTON: -- at the end of this month?

23 MS. WOODS: Oh, is this your last meeting?

24 MS. DOUGLAS: Yes.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: I think -- I think this is --

1 MS. DOUGLAS: This is my last day today.

2 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

3 MR. SUTTON: And we had such a connection.

4 MS. DOUGLAS: That's what they all say.

5 2. CONSIDERATION OF STANDARDS FOR ACCREDITATION WAIVERS

6 a) OUACHITA SCHOOL DISTRICT

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Okay. So we're
8 going to move on to Standards for Accreditation
9 Waivers. Mr. Sutherlin.

10 DR. SUTHERLIN: So Matthew Sutherlin,
11 Coordinator for Standards and Systems Support,
12 Charter.

13 Ouachita School District is requesting a
14 standards for accreditation waiver for 1-A.5, that's
15 Class Size for a kindergarten class. It's actually
16 one student over the maximum class size with a half-
17 time paraprofessional in the classroom. And I
18 believe Ms. Ellen Coleman is online.

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Ms. Coleman? Ms. Coleman, are
20 you on the line?

21 DR. SUTHERLIN: There she is.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: There we are. Welcome.

23 MS. COLEMAN: Can you hear me?

24 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yes.

25 MS. COLEMAN: Yes, I'm here.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: So this waiver is -- you have
2 one kindergarten class that has 23 students. Is that
3 correct?

4 MS. COLEMAN: That is correct. We did not
5 anticipate this, and so -- and it's just one over.
6 We do have paraprofessionals that are in the
7 classroom half-time. And we don't anticipate to have
8 this again, so --

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Do you anticipate putting that
10 para in there fulltime?

11 MS. COLEMAN: Yes. In fact, on paper we have
12 that they're halftime in each classroom, but we're
13 really working so that -- it may not be the same
14 paraprofessional, but we do have other
15 paraprofessionals that when she can't be in there
16 they go in to assist as well. So basically it is an
17 all-day situation.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. We'll see
19 if we have any questions from the Board.

20 Anyone on my left have a question?

21 On my right?

22 Okay. Not seeing any questions. Are we ready
23 for a motion?

24 MR. SUTTON: I'll make the motion to approve the
25 waiver.

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion by Mr.
2 Sutton to approve the waiver. Do we have a second?

3 DR. HILL: Second.

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Dr. Hill.

5 All in favor?

6 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

8 Okay. Motion passes.

9 Thank you, Ms. Coleman, for being here.

10 MS. COLEMAN: Thank you very much.

11 3. CONSIDERATION OF REQUESTS FOR ACT 1240 WAIVERS

12 a) DEER/MT. JUDEA SCHOOL DISTRICT

13 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Consideration for
14 Request for 1240 Waivers. Ms. Freno.

15 MS. FRENO: Thank you, Ms. Newton. Lori Freno.

16 This waiver request will be presented by Karli
17 Saracini.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Ms.
19 Saracini.

20 MS. SARACINI: Karli Saracini, Assistant
21 Commissioner. And I have Ms. -- come on up here, Ms.
22 Lupe and introduce yourself.

23 MS. LUPAY: Good morning. Lupe Pena de
24 Martinez, Director of Student Support Services.

25 MS. SARACINI: See, I couldn't have said it

1 quite like that.

2 We have -- I think that we have the
3 superintendents on. Yes, I see them. They're listed
4 under Lori Freno. So this is requesting a waiver
5 specifically for Library Media and this waiver, we
6 feel pretty good about it. And Melissa Jacks out of
7 my division really worked with Lupe and her team and
8 worked out a really good plan. As we look, we know
9 that it's hard to find teachers, certified
10 especially, in specialty areas, like Library Media.
11 And they are actually growing their own. And so I
12 will turn it over to them and they can answer or talk
13 about this. And they really do have a really good
14 strong plan.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Welcome.
16 We're glad that you're with us this morning. Could
17 you tell us a little bit about your plan?

18 SUPT. NAPIER: Yes, ma'am. Thank you, Madam
19 Chair, for considering our waiver request. I'm
20 Brenda Napier, Superintendent at Deer/Mt. Judea
21 School District.

22 MS. KING: And I'm Melissa King. Sorry; I know
23 we're supposed to be sworn in, I think. But thank
24 you for hearing our waiver and we appreciate that
25 everyone understands how hard it is to get teachers

1 in some of these specialty areas.

2 SUPT. NAPIER: So I'll start. And, again, she's
3 the Curriculum -- she's the specialist. But we met
4 previously, in October, with Licensure, Ms. Saracini,
5 Ms. Jacks, Ms. Barnett; you were the Department's
6 Library Media Specialist. We feel like what we
7 have is -- we have a paraprofessional and she had two
8 years; now she's on the third year of her college
9 degree. She is in the REACH program now and she has
10 been serving in this capacity, helping us all along.
11 She is home-grown. She has children in the school
12 system. She will -- she actually will have a
13 grandchild in the school system soon. So she's here
14 to stay.

15 So what we have is that we've established weekly
16 -- we will meet with our public county librarian that
17 is a Media Library Specialist. We will meet face-to-
18 face, not Zooming; we will meet face-to-face with
19 her, with Ms. King. She's our curriculum and reading
20 specialist. And Mrs. Barnett will meet monthly with
21 us to just help us. She's offered her assistance to
22 help supervise us and make sure that we're addressing
23 every standard from K-12, because we truly want the
24 best for our kids. And I feel like this is -- at the
25 time this is the very best we can do.

1 We will continue to network, to advertise, to
2 try to find a licensed Library Media Specialist. But
3 we have everyone that we can think of from -- and
4 even our co-op specialist -- even though there's no
5 Library Media Specialist there, their reading
6 specialist is also willing to meet with us. There's
7 kind of an hour distance between the county Library
8 Media Specialist and our school district. But
9 everyone is very interested in helping us make sure
10 that we're getting our Science of Reading covered and
11 that our reading scores will go up, and I think the
12 key person in that is always the Library Media
13 Specialist. We have had some awesome ones in the
14 past; we're just struggling this year to find that
15 person.

16 So I'm sure I've left out things, but we have
17 both the school, the district, we have your
18 department which is key with Mrs. Barnett -- she is
19 awesome to help us. So, again, ask us questions and
20 we would take all the suggestions that we can
21 possibly get to make this work.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Let's see
23 if we have any questions from the Board.

24 Anyone on my left have a question?

25 Mr. Wood.

1 MR. WOOD: The length of time surprises me just
2 a little bit, five years. Can you describe why such
3 a long period of time?

4 SUPT. NAPIER: All right. So as we worked with
5 Licensure, with Ms. Saracini and Ms. Jacks, Ms. Young
6 will be -- is our paraprofessional; so this is her
7 third year, so she would have to get her bachelor's
8 and then two years more for her masters in Library
9 Media Specialist. So that was just the timeframe
10 that we all chose because realistically we're looking
11 at four to finish her bachelor's and then her
12 masters.

13 MS. KING: And we're looking at when she
14 finishes her bachelor's doing an ALP instead of
15 utilizing the waiver actually, is what we're hoping
16 for.

17 MS. SARACINI: But we chose that because for
18 Library Media it takes a masters degree. And so
19 since she's just on year three of her bachelor's we
20 did not want to cause any undue harm if we said less
21 years and then have to come back. But they have a
22 pretty strong plan. We feel pretty good.

23 MR. WOOD: What if she leaves her employment
24 with the school district though next year?

25 SUPT. NAPIER: I'm sorry. Did you say if she

1 leaves?

2 MR. WOOD: Yeah. What if she were to no longer
3 be part of the team and then, you know, what would be
4 the next thing?

5 SUPT. NAPIER: Well, I feel -- we feel very
6 confident that she will not leave. She is rooted in
7 the community. She was the -- she was an alumni from
8 the school; she has no intentions of leaving here.
9 But the what-ifs, then we can -- so let's take the
10 worst case scenario: we are continuing the advertise
11 to try to get that licensed person, whether it's
12 tomorrow or next year. We're doing our very best.
13 The co-op is reaching out, trying to help us. If
14 that were to happen, then I think our next step would
15 be to ask one more time if we had an in-house
16 licensed teacher that would be interested in that
17 position. And then, again, for the most part then
18 they would have to do the two-year masters program to
19 get the Library Media Specialist. But that would be
20 our next plan, Mr. Wood. And thank you for those
21 questions.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Anyone on my right have a
23 question?

24 Okay. We are ready for a motion.

25 MS. McFETRIDGE: I was also a little concerned

1 about the timeframe, but reading through your plan I
2 think it's -- I think it's a good plan. And I
3 appreciate you working with your library, your county
4 library, and the co-op. So great to see those
5 partnerships that you've built.

6 So I'll go ahead and make the motion that we
7 approve the waiver for Deer and Mt. Judea School
8 Districts.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We have a motion to
10 grant the waiver.

11 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

12 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Henderson.
13 All in favor?

14 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

16 All right. Thank you.

17 SUPT. NAPIER: Thank you very much.

18 4. EDUCATIONAL SERVICE COOPERATIVE EVALUATIONS

19 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We have now the
20 Co-op Evaluations from Ms. Smith.

21 MS. SMITH: Good morning.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

23 MS. SMITH: Stacy Smith with the Department.

24 This has really been a treat to be able to be a
25 part of these evaluations. Each month I've got two

1 scheduled. And so in end of September, I visited
2 Northwest Arkansas Co-op and Guy Fenter Co-op and
3 conducted their evaluations. They are on the Zoom
4 today. We've got Director Roy Hester from Guy Fenter
5 and Angela Miller who is his TCC. And then you've
6 got Bryan Law from Northwest Cooperative and Dr.
7 Missy Hixson who is their TCC.

8 And just a few things -- I know you have the
9 reports and that you've read them, so I'm not going
10 to go over the whole piece of it. But I will say in
11 Northwest Arkansas one of the things that really
12 stood out was the differentiation of support between
13 the different districts pertaining to size. The
14 rural districts in their area have really talked
15 about and they were adamant about how much support
16 was provided and the difference it made. Larger
17 districts also use them differently but also were --
18 it was a vital role, especially for areas that were
19 -- you know, not the literacy and the math, but
20 those, you know, counselors and career and technical
21 pieces. While there at Northwest Arkansas they
22 highlighted their retention recruitment efforts --
23 and that probably is the most enlightening thing for
24 me is when I'm out at these co-ops and the work that
25 we're doing here at the Department -- these people

1 are the ones who are carrying the load. Okay. So
2 the retention efforts that Karli Saracini stands up
3 and talks to you guys about, these are the folks that
4 are actually carrying -- that's that connection
5 between the Department and the actual school
6 district. And the retention recruitment efforts and
7 the number of teachers that they have supported and
8 mentored was huge.

9 For Guy Fenter Co-op, now a completely different
10 cooperative serving completely different schools.
11 And one of the things that stood out there too --
12 they have more rural school districts obviously, and
13 over and over -- and we -- I mean we're bringing in,
14 you know, over 50 individuals to do interviews with
15 and that includes teachers, that includes
16 superintendents, principals, administrators; we've
17 heard from parents highlighting the support and
18 what's going on with these co-ops. On every one of
19 -- on both of these we had business folks and we had
20 parents as a part of our committee. And what was
21 interesting on both of these co-ops -- at the end the
22 committee members who went in to do the evaluation
23 were blown away and were like how can we share with
24 more people what these folks are doing here, and it's
25 really about telling the story.

1 So I'm going to pause for a second. Mr. Hester
2 or Bryan, do either one of you want to make a comment
3 about your respective co-op?

4 MR. LAW: Well, I would be glad to. And we are
5 grateful for the opportunity. We're -- we would be
6 welcoming to any time anyone wanted to come in and
7 see what our great team is doing here. You spoke
8 about our recruitment and retention team, and since
9 you were here about a month ago they have moved
10 forward with plans for a regional conference for Get
11 Your Teach On, to bring them into northwest Arkansas.
12 We're very excited about that. There's a tremendous
13 amount of work that is taking place with that great.
14 That is a large number for us and we're very proud of
15 them. I'm grateful that you highlighted them, but we
16 are equally proud of all of our programs and the work
17 they do with a large number -- you know, a hundred
18 thousand plus of the students in the state of
19 Arkansas are in this co-op and we're grateful for the
20 work that takes place here. And we would welcome you
21 at any time to come up and visit us and spend time
22 with us and see what our team is doing.

23 MS. SMITH: Thank you, Mr. Law.

24 MR. LAW: You're welcome.

25 MS. SMITH: Mr. Hester or Angela for Guy Fenter,

1 would either one of you like to make a comment?

2 MS. HIXSON: Yes, I'm in for Mr. Hester. He's
3 actually on his way. His grandbaby is going to be
4 here this afternoon, so we'll let him go for that.

5 We just wanted to say thank you so much to the
6 Department and to Stacy and the team that came in.
7 It was a lot of fun to be able to highlight things
8 that we do at our co-op and get feedback, reflect on
9 it, so that we can move forward to continue to serve
10 our schools. But we really enjoyed the day and
11 spending time with those and explaining what we do.

12 MS. SMITH: Yeah. At Guy Fenter Co-op, they
13 actually -- they highlighted retention recruitment as
14 well and they actually brought in some of their
15 novice teachers. It's like Northwest Arkansas did
16 the same thing. We got to hear from first year
17 teachers --

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Wow.

19 MS. SMITH: -- second year teachers and how the
20 cooperative is supporting them in their roles. It's
21 a big deal. So I enjoyed both of those.

22 So just asking the Board -- if you guys have any
23 questions for them, they're on here. If not, to
24 accept the reports.

25 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We'll see if we have

1 any questions.

2 Anyone on my right have a question?

3 Over here on my left?

4 Ms. McFetridge.

5 MS. McFETRIDGE: I'd like to say I really
6 appreciate the report. Sometimes it's hard for us to
7 know how much work you all do in the co-ops. But I
8 also wanted to say thank you so much for all the work
9 that you did with the schools during Covid and
10 helping with those virtual plans. Oh, my goodness.

11 MS. SMITH: Absolutely.

12 MS. McFETRIDGE: Just reading through those
13 plans to see how much help and support you gave those
14 districts, I can't thank you enough. So, thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Very well said. Yes, we
16 appreciate the co-ops and all that they do. And,
17 Northwest and Guy Fenter, y'all are doing great work
18 and I know your districts and your teachers
19 appreciate you. So thank you for what you're doing.

20 MS. SMITH: I do want the Board to know this is
21 a really thorough evaluation. It is not a day to go
22 in and do a dog-and-pony show. There is a rubric
23 set, there is a narrative provided. The co-ops are
24 responsible for providing evidence for us. So when
25 my team gets there, I mean we start at 8:00 and we

1 literally go through the narrative. We go through
2 all of their links looking for evidence to support
3 what they tell us. So just because they tell us this
4 is what they're doing, we then have to back it up
5 with evidence to show that. And then we conduct
6 interviews, and we conduct at least seven group
7 interviews every time. And during those interviews
8 we are then looking for evidence from the
9 stakeholders to back up what we saw in writing and
10 what we saw from basically their narrative report.
11 So they are thorough, we look at everything.

12 And so it's been a blessing and a treasure to
13 get out there and do this work. So, thank you guys.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Before you leave,
15 Ms. Smith, just one question. I know each co-op is a
16 little different as far as what they do. Do they do
17 sharing between co-ops as far as we tried this this
18 year and this really worked for our teachers and our
19 districts. Do they ever do anything like that?

20 MS. SMITH: So they actually come together every
21 month and they actually have their own like weekly
22 calls and Zoom meetings.

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

24 MS. SMITH: But they have in-person with the
25 directors and TCC's monthly --

1 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

2 MS. SMITH: -- where they come together and
3 share information. One of the things that I have
4 told them through this evaluation process is, you
5 know, it's just like teaching; you think you know
6 what the person right next to you is doing --

7 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

8 MS. SMITH: -- when you're collaborating and
9 talking. But when you've gone in their classroom and
10 you see it, you're like, "Oh, that's what you meant
11 by that." And so I'm hoping in this role to be able
12 to just be able to, when I see something really stand
13 out different at a co-op, to make sure the other
14 directors know to go and visit and see.

15 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay.

16 MS. SMITH: And I think -- in fact, I had one of
17 the directors from one of the co-ops actually serve
18 as a committee member evaluating another one. And he
19 walked away going, "I'm going to do these things."

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Yeah.

21 MS. SMITH: And so it's been beneficial. But
22 they do meet monthly. And I see Mr. Hester on here.

23 I thought you were going to the hospital, Mr.
24 Hester.

25 MR. HESTER: Well, you know how babies are; they

1 come when they get good and ready. Still in the
2 holding pattern.

3 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. Well --

4 MS. SMITH: But they do collaborate. Yeah.

5 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. We appreciate that.

6 So, thank you.

7 And so we need a motion to accept the reports.

8 MS. HUNTER: So moved.

9 MS. McFETRIDGE: Second.

10 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I have a motion by Ms.
11 Hunter and a second from Ms. McFetridge. All in
12 favor?

13 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

15 Motion passes.

16 5. CONSIDERATION OF DISTRICT CONVERSION PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL
17 APPLICATION FOR RIVERCREST HIGH PREP ACADEMY

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: All right. We are going to
19 look at District Conversion Public Charter School
20 Applications. Ms. Summons.

21 MS. SUMMONS: Good morning.

22 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning.

23 MS. SUMMONS: The Rivercrest Junior High Academy
24 submitted an application for a district conversion
25 charter school. The Charter Authorizing Panel voted

1 unanimously to approve the application for the
2 district conversion charter to open in the Fall of
3 2023, for grades 7 and 8 for five years. I have
4 Assistant Superintendent Shantele Raper; she is on
5 the Zoom in case you have any questions.

6 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. All right. Welcome.

7 MS. RAPER: Good morning.

8 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Good morning. We'll see if we
9 have any questions, Ms. Raper.

10 Any questions over here on my left?

11 On my right?

12 Okay. So now for -- a motion for this charter
13 would be to review or not review the application or
14 the -- yes, the application.

15 MR. HENDERSON: I'd like to make a motion not to
16 review.

17 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. I have a motion by Mr.
18 Henderson not to review.

19 MS. WOODS: I'll second.

20 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Ms. Woods.

21 All in favor?

22 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

23 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

24 Okay. Motion passes.

25 Thank you, Ms. Raper, for being here.

1 MS. RAPER: Thank you.

2 6. VOLUNTARY SURRENDER OF IDEA PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF ARKANSAS
3 CHARTER

4 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. Ms. Summons, you also I
5 think have the next one.

6 MS. SUMMONS: Yes. IDEA Public Schools of
7 Arkansas submitted a letter of voluntary surrender
8 for their charter school.

9 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. And if I'm not
10 mistaken, this one had not opened yet and was
11 scheduled to open next year, and they pushed it back
12 to the next year, and now have decided not to open?

13 MS. SUMMONS: Yes, ma'am.

14 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Okay. And so would this be --
15 this would be -- would this be a review or not review
16 or to --

17 MS. SUMMONS: Yes, ma'am.

18 CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Still review or not review.
19 Okay. All right.

20 Any questions on this one?

21 MS. WOODS: Did the Charter Authorizing Panel
22 review this as well?

23 MS. SUMMONS: Yes.

24 MS. WOODS: And they -- unanimous?

25 MS. SUMMONS: Yes.

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CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any other questions?

Okay. We are ready for a motion.

MS. McFETRIDGE: I make a motion not to review.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Have a motion by Ms.
McFetridge not to review.

MR. SUTTON: I'll second.

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Seconded by Mr. Sutton.

All in favor?

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIRMAN NEWTON: Any opposed?

Okay. Motion passes.

Okay. That's the end of our action agenda.

(The Action Agenda was concluded at 11:13 a.m.)

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