

IN THE MATTER OF : NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

THE CERTIFICATE OF : STATE BOARD OF EXAMINERS

CARA L. STEINBERG : ORDER OF REVOCATION

_____ : DOCKET NO: 2223-186

At its meeting of June 26, 2024, the State Board of Examiners (Board) reviewed information from the Office of Student Protection (OSP), the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, and the New York State Department of Education regarding Cara L. Steinberg. Steinberg currently holds a Chief School Administrator Certificate of Eligibility.

On January 18, 2023, Steinberg's New York educator certificates were revoked after she was convicted of two (2) counts of federal Health Care Fraud, 18 U.S.C. § 1347(a). She was sentenced to two (2) years of probation and restitution in the amount of \$109,575.00, along with other terms and conditions.

Upon review of the above information, the Board voted, at its meeting of September 21, 2023, to issue Steinberg an Order to Show Cause as to why her certificates should not be revoked. On October 23, 2023, the Board sent Steinberg the Order to Show Cause by regular and certified mail, return receipt requested. The Order provided that Steinberg had 30 days to respond pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B- 4.6(b)*. The certified mail copy was signed and returned and the regular mail was not returned. Steinberg did not file a response.

On January 11, 2024, the Board sent Steinberg another notice by certified and regular mail, providing her an additional 15 days to respond to the Order to Show Cause pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. The certified mail copy was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Steinberg did not file a response.

Thereafter, pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(e)*, on March 28, 2024, the Board sent Steinberg

a hearing notice by regular and certified mail. The notice explained that there appeared to be no material facts in dispute. Thus, Steinberg was offered an opportunity to submit written arguments on the issue of whether the conduct addressed in the Order to Show Cause constituted conduct unbecoming a certificate holder, as well as arguments with regard to the appropriate sanction in the event that the Board found just cause to take action against her certificates. It also explained that, upon review of the charges against her and the legal arguments tendered in her defense, the Board would determine if her offense warranted action against her certificates. Thereupon, the Board would also determine the appropriate sanction, if any. Steinberg was also offered the opportunity to appear before the Board to provide testimony on the sanction issue. The certified mail receipt was signed and returned and the regular mail copy was not returned. Steinberg did not file a response, nor did she notify the Board that she wished to appear for a hearing.

The threshold issue before the Board in this matter is whether Steinberg's conduct, conviction, and action on out-of-state certificates constitute conduct unbecoming a certificate holder or other just cause. Because Steinberg failed to respond to the Order to Show Cause, the allegations are deemed admitted. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(c)*. As such, no material facts related to Steinberg's conduct are in dispute, and the Board determined that summary decision was appropriate in this matter. *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.6(h)*. Consequently, at its meeting of June 27, 2024, the Board considered only the allegations in the Order to Show Cause and the information received from OSP, the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification, and the New York State Department of Education.

The Board must now determine whether Steinberg's conduct, conviction, and action on her New York educator certificates, as set forth in the Order to Show Cause, represent just cause to act against her New Jersey certificate pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:9B-4.4*. A "violation of the implicit standard of good behavior which devolves upon one who stands in the public eye as an upholder of

that which is morally and legally correct” may provide the basis for a finding of unbecoming conduct. *Bound Brook Bd. of Educ. v. Ciripompa*, 228 N.J. 4, 14 (2017) (quoting *Karins v. City of Atlantic City*, 152 N.J. 532, 555 (1998)). The “elastic” concept of “conduct unbecoming” includes “conduct which adversely affects the morale or efficiency” of the public entity or “which has a tendency to destroy public respect for . . . [public] employees and confidence in the operation of [public] services.” *In re Emmons*, 63 N.J. Super. 136, 140 (App. Div. 1960); accord *Bound Brook Bd. of Educ.*, 228 N.J. at 13. Moreover, unfitness to hold a position in a school system may be shown by one incident, if sufficiently flagrant. *Redcay v. State Bd. of Educ.*, 130 N.J.L. 369, 371 (1943), *aff’d*, 131 N.J.L. 326 (E & A 1944).

The Board finds that Steinberg engaged in conduct unbecoming of an educator. Committing conduct leading to conviction on two counts of federal health care fraud are not actions of a role model for students. Further, actions taken by other states to revoke educator certificates based on conduct clearly support a determination of unbecoming conduct and provides the basis for the Board’s finding. In this instance, the Board finds that Steinberg’s conduct and conviction for federal health care fraud is conduct unbecoming of an educator as her behavior falls far short of a role model.

The Board may revoke or suspend the certification of any certificate holder on the basis of demonstrated inefficiency, incapacity, conduct unbecoming a teacher or other just cause. *N.J.A.C.* 6A:9B-4.4. “Teachers... are professional employees to whom the people have entrusted the care and custody of ... school children. This heavy duty requires a degree of self-restraint and controlled behavior rarely requisite to other types of employment.” *Tenure of Sammons*, 1972 S.L.D. 302, 321. Moreover, it is well established that the Board has the right to revoke a certificate where the teacher was involved in criminal activities, even if the activities were unrelated to the classroom. *See Cox v. State Board of Examiners*, (App. Div. Docket No. A-3527-81T3) (November 18, 1983); *State*

Board of Examiners v. Krupp, 3 N.J.A.R. 285 (1981). “A teacher’s whole life is subject to scrutiny, not just his [or her] actions within the schoolhouse doors.” In re Certificates of Kevin Jordan, OAL Dkt. No. EDE 00460-07, Initial Decision (Dec. 6, 2007), adopted, Final Decision, Comm’r, Agency Dkt. No. 0506-287 (Feb. 28, 2008), aff’d, In re Certificates of Kevin Jordan, 2009 N.J. Super. Unpub. LEXIS 2439 (App. Div. 2009).

In this instance, the Board finds that Steinberg’s conduct and conviction provide just cause to take action against her certificate. Further, the record established that New York State revoked Steinberg’s educator certificates as a result of her conduct and conviction. Committing health care fraud is not a victimless crime and causes monetary losses and raises premiums. Thus, the Board concludes that the appropriate response to Steinberg’s breach in conduct of an educator is revocation of her certificates.

Accordingly, on June 27, 2024, the Board voted to revoke Cara Steinberg’s Chief School Administrator Certificate of Eligibility. On this 19th day of September 2024, the Board voted to adopt its formal written decision, and it is therefore ORDERED that Steinberg’s certificate be REVOKED, effective immediately. It is further ORDERED that Steinberg return her certificate to the Secretary of the State Board of Examiners, Office of Certification and Induction, P.O. Box 500, Trenton, NJ 08625-0500 within 30 days of the mailing date of this decision.



Rani Singh, Secretary
State Board of Examiners

Date of Mailing:
By Certified and Regular mail

Appeals may be made to the Commissioner of Education pursuant to the provisions of *N.J.S.A.* 18A:6-38.4.