

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the Revocation or)
Suspension of the Educator Certificate of)
Allison Leigh Chilton,)
Educator Certificate 265887)
_____)

ORDER OF SUMMARY SUSPENSION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The Chair of the South Carolina State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on January 12, 2018. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2016), § 59-5-10 (2016), and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) requested that the Chair of the State Board summarily suspend the educator certificate of Allison Leigh Chilton, educator certificate 265887, as a result of the pending criminal charges against her. Ms. Chilton has been charged with two felony counts of Criminal Sexual Conduct with a Minor, 3rd degree, S.C. Code Ann. §16-3-655(C) (2017) and one felony count of Criminal Solicitation of a Minor, S.C. Code Ann. §16-15-342 (2017). The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Ms. Chilton may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students, who may be under her instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Ms. Chilton's educator certificate shall be summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Ms. Chilton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Chilton holds a professional South Carolina educator certificate and has over four years of teaching experience. Ms. Chilton was hired by Dorchester County School District Two (District) in 2013. She served as a special education teacher at Oakbrook Middle School (School). On January 2, 2018, the District placed Ms. Chilton on administrative leave following an allegation that she had exchanged inappropriate text messages with a student. She subsequently resigned her position with the District effective January 11, 2018.

On January 9, 2018, the Dorchester County Sheriff's Office charged Ms. Chilton with two felony counts of Criminal Sexual Conduct with a Minor, 3rd Degree, S.C. Code Ann. §16-3-655(C) (2017) and one felony count of Criminal Solicitation of a Minor, S.C. Code Ann. §16-15-342 (2017). It is alleged Ms. Chilton engaged in inappropriate communications of a sexual nature with a 12-year-old female student from August 1, 2017 to December 29, 2017. Ms. Chilton confessed to kissing the student and it is alleged Ms. Chilton fondled the student's breasts. The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of this allegation of misconduct, Ms. Chilton may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students who may be under her instruction, and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Ms. Chilton's educator certificate shall be summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved. The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Ms. Chilton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The South Carolina Board of Education may, for just cause, either revoke or suspend the certificate of any person." S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-150 (2016). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct, immorality, any conduct involving moral turpitude, crime against the law of this State, and evident unfitness for position for which employed. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2016); 24 S.C. Code Ann. Regs. 43-58 (2016). In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2016), "If the agency finds that the public health, safety or welfare imperatively requires emergency action, and incorporates a finding to that effect in its order, summary suspension of a license may be ordered pending proceedings for revocation or other action." Pursuant to S.C. Code Ann § 59-5-10 (2016) and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the Chair of the State Board finds that as a result of the allegations of Ms. Chilton's unprofessional conduct, immorality, conduct involving moral turpitude, evident unfitness for position for which employed, her arrest for Criminal Sexual Conduct with a Minor and Criminal Solicitation of a Minor, and her admission to kissing the student, there is reason to believe Ms. Chilton may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students and emergency action is required. Accordingly, the educator certificate of Allison Leigh Chilton, educator certificate 265887, is summarily suspended until a due process hearing is held and/or this matter is otherwise resolved.

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The SCDE is directed to serve notice on Ms. Chilton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

By: Sharon Wall

Sharon Wall, Ed.D., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
January 12, 2018