

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the

Disciplinary Action of the

Educator Certificate of

Anna Patton

Certificate 294453

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 14, 2020. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2017), § 59-5-10 (2017), 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 Anna Patton, educator certificate 294453, as a result of her arrest on the felony counts of criminal solicitation of a minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-342(2018), disseminating harmful material to minors S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-385(A)(B)(2018) and sexual battery with a student 16 or 17 years of age, no aggravated force or coercion S.C. Code Ann. § 16-3-755(B)(2018).

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Ms. Patton 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. Patton'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. Patton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of her educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Patton holds a valid South Carolina professional educator certificate and has no former educator experience. At the time of her arrest, Ms. Patton was employed by the Darlington County School District (District) as a teacher at Lamar High School (School).

On January 11, 2020, a concerned parent contacted the Darlington County Sheriff's Office to report allegations that Ms. Patton had engaged in an inappropriate relationship with a student. It was alleged Ms. Patton sent the student nude photos, inappropriate text messages, and had engaged in sex with the student. Ms. Patton was arrested for sexual battery with a student, criminal solicitation of a minor, and disseminating harmful material to a minor. Law enforcement notified the School's resource officer of the pending charges and Ms. Patton was placed on administrative leave from the District.

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of this allegation of misconduct, Ms. Patton 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. Patton'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. Patton 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 (2017); S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2017). Just cause includes unprofessional conduct, crime against the law of this State, and evident unfitness for position for which employed. S.C. Code Ann. § 59-25-160 (2017); 24 S.C. Code Regs. 43-58 (2017). In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2017), "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 (2017) and State Board Rule of Governance BBABA, the Chair of the State Board finds that as a result of the allegations of Ms. Patton's unprofessional conduct, crime against the law of this State or the United States, and

evident unfitness for the position for which employed, due to her felony arrest for charges of criminal solicitation of a minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-342(2018), disseminating harmful material to minors S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-385(A)(B)(2018) and sexual battery with a student 16 or 17 years of age, no aggravated force or coercion S.C. Code Ann. § 16-3-755(B)(2018), there is reason to believe Ms. Patton may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students and emergency action is required.

Accordingly, the educator certificate of Anna Patton, educator certificate 294453, is 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. Patton of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

s/Michael Brennan
Michael Brennan, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
January 14, 2020