

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Janai Mercedes Smothers
Certificate 275118

ORDER OF PERMANENT REVOCATION

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on March 8, 2022. On December 2, 2021, the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE) sent a notice letter to Janai Mercedes Smothers regarding the possible suspension or revocation of her South Carolina educator certificate. The regular mail has not been returned and the SCDE has verified Ms. Smother's address. On February 2, 2022, the SCDE sent Ms. Smothers a final notice informing her that this matter would be presented to the State Board on March 8, 2022. Ms. Smothers has been given fair notice of constitutional due process. She has not contacted the SCDE to request a hearing and is now in default. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board voted to permanently revoke Ms. Smothers' educator certificate 275118, effective March 8, 2022.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Ms. Smothers holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has no prior teaching experience in South Carolina. The SCDE learned of Ms. Smothers' misconduct through the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (NASDTEC) clearinghouse.

On September 5, 2017, Ms. Smothers was arrested for one count of sexual battery by an authority figure. The charge stemmed from the 2015-16 school year, when Ms. Smothers was teaching in Nashville, Tennessee. It was alleged that Ms. Smothers engaged in inappropriate conduct with a 14-year-old student. Ms. Smothers was required to register with the Tennessee Sex offender Registry, where the offense is listed as sexual battery. At the time of her arrest, Ms. Smothers was teaching in California. On September 16, 2019, the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing revoked Ms. Smother's teaching certificate in California.

Ms. Smothers has not responded to the notice letters from the SCDE and has not requested a hearing in this matter. After considering the evidence presented, the State Board

voted to permanently revoke Ms. Smothers' educator certificate 275118, effective March 8, 2022.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

"The State Board 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, crime against the law of this State or the United States, 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). The State Board finds that Ms. Smothers engaged in unprofessional conduct, immorality, and conduct involving moral turpitude, due to the allegations of an inappropriate sexual conduct with a student.

The State Board finds that the evidence presented by the SCDE supports its decision that just cause exists to permanently revoke educator certificate 275118, issued in the name of Janai Mercedes Smothers, effective March 8, 2022. The permanent revocation of Ms. Smothers' educator certificate 275118 shall be reported to the NASDTEC Clearinghouse and all South Carolina school districts within thirty days from the date of this order.

AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina State Board of Education

s/Alan Walters

Alan Walters, Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
March 8, 2022