

BEFORE THE SOUTH CAROLINA STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

In the Matter of the
Disciplinary Action of the
Educator Certificate of
Mathew Abongo
Certificate 306780

Order of Summary Suspension

SUMMARY OF THE CASE

The State Board of Education (State Board) considered this matter on August 11, 2023. In accordance with S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-370(c) (2020), § 59-5-10 (2020), 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 Mathew Abongo, educator certificate 306780, as a result of his arrest for sexual battery of a student S.C. Code Ann. § 16-03-755 (2010), and contributing to the delinquency of a minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (1976).

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of these allegations of misconduct, Mr. Abongo may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students, who may be under his instruction and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Abongo'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 Mr. Abongo of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

FINDINGS OF FACT

Mr. Abongo holds a South Carolina educator certificate and has over thirteen years of educator experience. At the time of the incident, Mr. Abongo was a teacher for Darlington County School District (District). On or about August 8, 2023, Mr. Abongo was arrested for sexual battery with a student, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-15-342 (2010), and contributing to the delinquency of a minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (1976).

The SCDE has reason to believe that, due to the serious nature of this allegation of misconduct, Mr. Abongo may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students who may be under his instruction, and that emergency action is required. After considering the evidence presented by the SCDE, the Chair of the State Board finds that Mr. Abongo'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 Mr. Abongo of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his 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 Mr. Abongo'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 his arrest for sexual battery with a student, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-03-755 (2010), and contributing to the delinquency of a minor, S.C. Code Ann. § 16-17-490 (1976), there is reason to believe Mr. Abongo may pose a threat to the health, safety, and welfare of students and emergency action is required.

Accordingly, the educator certificate of Mathew Abongo, certificate number 306780, 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 Mr. Abongo of the summary suspension, as well as the possible suspension or revocation of his educator certificate.

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AND IT IS SO ORDERED.

South Carolina Board of Education

s/Crystal F. Stapleton, Ed.D.
Crystal F. Stapleton, Ed.D., Chair

Columbia, South Carolina
August 11, 2023