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Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Commission

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www.ethics.ga.gov

January 27, 2021

Via USPS Regular Mail

**RE: IN THE MATTER OF TARECE JOHNSON
CASE NO. 20-0086-C**

Dear [REDACTED]

Please find attached a copy of the Response to the Notice of Complaint in the above referenced matter. It serves as notification that a response has been received from the Respondent regarding the allegations presented in your complaint.

We are reviewing this matter in accordance with our investigatory responsibility under the Georgia Government Transparency and Campaign Finance Act. You will be contacted with information regarding hearings in this matter.

Should you have any questions, please contact the assigned attorney, Joseph Cusack at 404-463-1980 or jcusack@ethics.ga.gov.

Respectfully,

/s/ Katie Easterwood

Katie Easterwood
Paralegal

Enclosed: Response

January 25, 2021

**RE: Notice of Additional Allegations 20-0086-C:
In the matter of Dr. Tarece Johnson**

Mr. Cusack,

Thank you for your time and understanding in this matter. In response to violation of O.C.G.A § 21-5-34(c)(2)(A), I would appreciate the opportunity to explain the confusion and any possible irregularities in order to better resolve the issue and move forward.

Dr. Johnson filed a Declaration of Intention to Accept Campaign funds (DOI) for State Senate on February 24, 2020. Recruitment efforts from elected officials and coaxing from community members convinced Dr. Johnson to instead run for Board of Education, District 5. No funds were ever sought nor collected for the State Senate campaign. Dr. Johnson, did however, open a bank account in February with the expectation of running for office.

Dr. Johnson filed her Declaration of Candidacy for school board in Gwinnett County, Georgia on March 3, 2020. The state soon closed in response to the Corona Virus Pandemic, leaving Dr. Johnson in a difficult situation. This was an unprecedented event with extraordinary circumstances that impacted many areas of Dr. Johnson's life. As a first-time candidate, Dr. Johnson did not know that another DOI needed to be filed because she assumed her original DOI would cover the school board campaign. Additionally, at no point was Dr. Johnson informed of the need to file a separate DOI to accept school board campaign contributions.

After declaring her candidacy, Dr. Johnson used \$1518.61 of her personal finances to begin her campaign. She personally purchased mailers, handbills, and a website, accounting for the personal loan of \$1518.61. None of these funds came from outside sources. Dr. Johnson then began accepting moderate campaign donations, not realizing the error in her collections.

Upon COVID restrictions being slightly lifted, Dr. Johnson was able to find and hire a campaign financial manager, Vincent Olsziewski, at the end of April. At this point, she was informed of her error and attempted to rectify the situation by filing the appropriate DOI to allow school board campaign contributions, listing Olsziewski as campaign treasurer, on May 1, 2020. Mr. Olsziewski was thus forth in charge of any and all future filings associated with Dr. Tarece's campaign and has been notified of the missing December filing. Olsziewski has assured Dr. Johnson that the filing issue will be addressed by the end of the week.

We prayerfully ask the Campaign Finance Commission to have grace regarding this situation. Please consider the earnest mistake of not refiling another DOI, extraordinary conditions created due to the pandemic, and the minimal funding collected during this time frame. Thank you for your patience, empathy, and understanding in resolving this complaint.

Sincerely,

Gelice Pace
Gelice Pace
(Assistant)
xg.pace@gmail.com
678-612-2613

Dr. Tarece L. Johnson

Dr. Tarece Johnson
Board of Education, District 5
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678-438-3011