FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Commissioner of Education

October 22, 2026

CERTIFIED MAIL

Ms. Elizabeth Ballard
3414 Key Avenue
Sarasota, Florida 34239

RE: Finding of Probable Cause
Case No.: 267-0144
DOE No.: 937249

Dear Ms. Ballard:

Pursuant to the provisions of Sections 1012.795 and 1012.796, Florida Statutes, I find probable cause exists to justify sanctions against your Florida educator certificate. Penalties levied against you may include reprimand, fine, probation, restriction of the scope of practice, suspension not to exceed five years, revocation not to exceed ten years or the permanent revocation of your Educator Certificate.

An Administrative Complaint and Election of Rights (appeal) form are enclosed. Please complete and sign the enclosed Election of Rights form and return the fully executed form to the Office of Professional Practices Services, 325 West Gaines Street, 224E, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, contact the Office of Professional Practices Services at (850) 245-0438.

Please govern yourself accordingly.

Sincerely,

Henry Mack

Henry Mack, Ed.D.

ENCLOSURES

cc: Stephanie Schaap

STATE OF FLORIDA
EDUCATION PRACTICES COMMISSION

HENRY MACK, as
Commissioner of Education,

Petitioner,

vs. **CASE NO. 267-0144**

ELIZABETH K. BALLARD,

Respondent.

_____/

ADMINISTRATIVE COMPLAINT

Petitioner, Henry Mack, as Commissioner of Education, files this Administrative Complaint against ELIZABETH K. BALLARD. The Petitioner seeks the appropriate disciplinary sanction of the Respondent's educator's certificate pursuant to sections 1012.315, 1012.795, and 1012.796, Florida Statutes, and pursuant to Rule 6A-10.081, Florida Administrative Code, Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession in Florida, said sanctions specifically set forth in sections 1012.795(1) and 1012.796(7), Florida Statutes.

The Petitioner alleges:

JURISDICTION

1. The Respondent holds Florida Educator's Certificate 937249, covering the areas of Gifted, Business Education, Health, Physical Education, Social Science, which is valid through June 30, 2028.

2. At all times pertinent hereto, the Respondent was employed as a History Teacher at Pine View School in the Sarasota County School District.

MATERIAL ALLEGATIONS

3. During the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years, Respondent discussed controversial political topics such as illegal immigration, abortion, domestic violence, slavery reparations, and modern divorce laws with her middle school students. These topics were outside of the curriculum in Respondent's class.

4. During the 2024-2025 school year, Respondent acted inappropriately towards M.M., a male eighth-grade student, by rejecting M.M.'s political views, and in doing so, thereby imposing and supporting Respondent's own political views. Examples of Respondent's inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

a) In or around September of 2024, M.M. engaged in a discussion on illegal immigration during Respondent's class. Due to comments Respondent considered offensive made by M.M., Respondent shut down the class debate.
b) In or around September of 2024, M.M.'s parents told Respondent they did not want M.M. to participate in future political debates. In contravention of the parent's wishes, Respondent encouraged M.M. to continue speaking on controversial topics.
c) On or about October 24, 2024, Respondent sent an email directly to M.M, titled "Concerns." In this email correspondence, Respondent referred to M.M.'s statements in class as "offensive to me as your teacher and women in general." Additionally, Respondent referred to M.M. allegedly making statements about commentator, Andrew Tate, in which Respondent said she can "put a stop to you sharing your views that parrot Andrew Tate". Moreover, Respondent ended the email correspondence by stating that she would not tolerate "misogyny" in her class.
d) Respondent asked M.M.'s mother if there was another "male authority figure" that may have an influence on M.M.'s political views. Additionally, Respondent contacted M.M.'s math tutor, a non-school employee, and discussed concerns about M.M.'s "misogynistic" views and M.M.'s father's influence on M.M.
e) Respondent discussed M.M. and his comments during class with the basketball coach at the school. In this conversation, Respondent indicated that M.M. should not be practicing with the team due to absences from her class.
f) Respondent compared M.M. to Respondent's father during a class discussion, stating that Respondent's father and M.M. shared similar views of the world, or words to that effect.

5. During the 2025-2026 school year, Respondent acted inappropriately towards Z.M., a male seventh-grade student and M.M.'s brother. Examples of Respondent's inappropriate conduct include, but are not limited to, the following:

a) In or around January of 2026, Respondent discussed Z.M. with other educators in a group chat, although Z.M. was not in Respondent's class. In these messages, Respondent indicated she was upset with comments Z.M. made to a substitute teacher during class. In addition, Respondent spoke with Z.M.'s basketball coach about the incident.
b) On or about May 13, 2026, Respondent filed a disciplinary complaint against Z.M. This complaint alleged that Z.M. entered Respondent's classroom on multiple occasions and yelled statements. Upon a review of the records and video, Z.M. was cleared of wrongdoing.

The Petitioner charges:

STATUTE VIOLATIONS

COUNT 1: The Respondent is in violation of section 1012.795(1)(g), Florida Statutes, in that Respondent, upon investigation, has been found guilty of personal conduct that seriously reduces that person's effectiveness as an employee of the district school board.

COUNT 2: The Respondent is in violation of section 1012.795(1)(j), Florida Statutes, in that Respondent has violated the Principles of Professional Conduct for the Education Profession prescribed by State Board of Education rules.

RULE VIOLATIONS

COUNT 3: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(a)1, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has failed to make reasonable effort to protect the student from conditions harmful to learning and/or to the student's mental health and/or physical health and/or safety.

COUNT 4: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(a)10, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has harassed or discriminated against a student on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs, marital status, handicapping condition, sexual orientation, or social and family background and shall make reasonable effort to assure that each student is protected from harassment or discrimination.

COUNT 5: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(a)12, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has failed to keep in confidence personally identifiable information obtained in the course of professional services, unless disclosure served professional purposes or is required by law.

COUNT 6: The allegations of misconduct set forth herein are in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(b)1, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent has failed to take reasonable precautions to distinguish between personal views and those of any educational institution or organization with which the individual is affiliated.

COUNT 7: The Respondent is in violation of Rule 6A-10.081(2)(c)15, Florida Administrative Code, in that Respondent sought reprisal against any individual who has reported an allegation of a violation of the Florida School Code or State Board of Education Rules as defined in section 1012.795(1), Florida Statutes.

(SIGNATURE ON FOLLOWING PAGE)

WHEREFORE, based on the reasons set forth herein and in accordance with the Explanation of Rights and Election of Rights forms attached to and made a part of this Administrative Complaint, Petitioner respectfully recommends that the Education Practices Commission impose an appropriate sanction against the Respondent's educator's certificate pursuant to the authority provided in sections 1012.795(1) and 1012.796(7), Florida Statutes. The sanctions imposed by the Education Practices Commission may include, but are not limited to, any one or a combination of the following: issuing the Respondent a written reprimand; placing the Respondent on probation for any period of time; restricting the Respondent's authorized scope of practice; assessing the Respondent an administrative fine; directing the Respondent to enroll in the Recovery Network Program; suspending the Respondent's educator's certificate for a period of time not to exceed five years; revoking the Respondent's educator's certificate for a period of time up to 10 years or permanently; determining the Respondent to be ineligible for certification; or barring the Respondent from reapplying for an educator's certificate for a period of time up to 10 years or permanently.

EXECUTED on this 22 day of October, 20 26.

Henry Mack

HENRY MACK, as
Commissioner of Education
State of Florida

ELECTION OF RIGHTS

Henry Mack, Ed.D., Commissioner of Education,
Petitioner,

vs. **File No.:** 267-0144

ELIZABETH K BALLARD
Respondent. /

Mark your election by checking option 1, 2, 3 or 4. (Select one option)

1. [ ] **FORMAL HEARING OPTION** I dispute the allegations of the Administrative Complaint and I request a Formal Hearing before a Hearing Officer of the Division of Administrative Hearings. The facts I dispute are:

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Attach additional sheet(s) if needed.

2. [ ] **SETTLEMENT OPTION** I neither admit nor deny the allegations and request a forty-five (45) day period to negotiate a settlement agreement. If an agreement is not reached I request: (Select One)

[ ] **Informal Hearing** - I do not dispute the allegation
Or
[ ] **Formal Hearing** - The facts I dispute are:

_____
_____
_____
_____

*If neither Informal nor Formal is checked, the action will be scheduled for an Informal Hearing.

3. [ ] **INFORMAL HEARING OPTION** I do not dispute the allegations of the Administrative Complaint and request an Informal Hearing before the Education Practices Commission.

4. [ ] **SURRENDER OPTION** I voluntarily surrender my certificate(s) for permanent revocation.

I have read the Explanation of Rights and understand my options.

(EXECUTION BEFORE A NOTARY PUBLIC NOT REQUIRED IF CHOOSING OPTION 1)

_____
Signature of Respondent

_____
Street Address

_____
City

_____
Telephone No.

_____
EMail Address

STATE OF FLORIDA
COUNTY OF _____
The foregoing instrument was acknowledged before me this _____ day of _____, 20____,

by _____
(Print Respondent's Name)

_____
Signature of Notary Public

Personally Known __ or Produced Identification Type of _____

Print, Type or Stamp Commissioned Name of Notary Public _____

Your fully executed election of rights form must be returned within 21 days to:

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES SERVICES
325 WEST GAINES STREET, SUITE 224
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA 32399-0400
or
via email to EOR@fldoe.org

EXPLANATION OF ELECTION OF RIGHTS

The enclosed Administrative Complaint outlines charges brought against you by the Florida Commissioner of Education. To respond to the charges you must indicate your choice of response on the enclosed Election of Rights form and **return it within 21 days of the date of receipt.** If you fail to return this fully executed form within 21 days of receipt, you waive your right to request a hearing and the complaint will be filed with the Education Practices Commission for final action.

1. **Formal Hearing** before the Division of Administrative Hearings. The Administrative Procedures Act, Section 120.57(1), Florida Statutes, and Section 1012.796, Florida Statutes, govern the formal hearing process. This choice means you deny some or all of the factual allegations in the Administrative Complaint. There will be a full administrative hearing on the issues. The Commissioner will be represented by an attorney and will bring forth witnesses. You may choose to have an attorney or represent yourself in the proceedings. (See www.doah.state.fl.us for more information.)

2. **Settlement Agreement** with the Department of Education. This choice means you neither admit nor deny the allegations in the Administrative Complaint, but wish to negotiate a settlement. In a settlement agreement, you will accept certain conditions in order to resolve the case. If you do not reach a settlement, you have the choice to reschedule the case to a formal or informal hearing by indicating that selection on the attached form. (If you fail to indicate your back-up selection, your case will automatically be scheduled for an informal hearing.)

3. **Informal Hearing** before the Education Practices Commission. The Florida Administrative Procedures Act, Section 120.57(2), Florida Statutes, governs the informal hearing process. This option means you choose not to dispute the factual allegations or charges of the Administrative Complaint. You have the right to appear before a panel of the Education Practices Commission to state why a lenient penalty or no penalty is appropriate. If you do not want to make a personal appearance, you or your representative, may submit written statements on your behalf. Any written statement must be submitted to the Education Practices Commission staff no later than 30 days before the scheduled informal hearing.

4. **Voluntary Surrender** of your Florida Educator's Certificate. This choice means you do not contest any of the allegations or charges in the Administrative Complaint and voluntarily surrender your certificate for **permanent revocation.** Once surrendered, the certificate will never be reinstated and the rules of the Department of Education do not permit you to apply for a new certificate. Your right to any Florida Educator's Certificate is forever revoked and relinquished.

Regardless of which selection you make, the Education Practices Commission (Sections 1012.79 and 1012.795, Florida Statutes) will issue a Final Order to finalize the process. For more information on this process, please visit www.myfloridateacher.com