

MAGGIE LITZ
DOMANOWSKI,

Appellant

v.

BALTIMORE COUNTY
BOARD OF EDUCATION,

Appellee.

BEFORE THE

MARYLAND

STATE BOARD

OF EDUCATION

Opinion No. 25-36

OPINION

INTRODUCTION

Maggie Litz Domanowski (“Appellant”) appeals the decision of the Baltimore County Board of Education (“local board”) to censure her. The local board filed a response maintaining that its decision was not arbitrary, unreasonable, or illegal. Appellant responded and the local board replied.

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

In 2022, Appellant was elected to serve a four-year term as the District 3 representative for the local board. At a public local board work session held on January 28, 2025, Appellant questioned Baltimore County Public Schools (“BCPS”) Superintendent Dr. Myriam Rogers about specific items in the \$2.98 billion FY 2026 Operating Budget.¹ Appellant was allotted 3 minutes to ask her questions about the budget. One minute and thirty seconds into asking her questions, the board chair asked the Appellant to hold her questions to allow other local board members to ask their questions. After Appellant clarified that she had additional time left for questioning, Appellant asked the Superintendent about the College Readiness Program, and the Superintendent requested that Appellant clarify which page of the budget book she was referencing. Appellant responded to the Superintendent stating, “It’s in your budget. You cut it by 50% this year.” *Id.* Then as the Superintendent was addressing Appellant to help identify the page, Appellant supplied the budget numbers she was referencing to assist the Superintendent in responding to Appellant’s question. *Id.*

On February 11, 2025, local board officers, Chair Jane Lichter, and Vice Chair Robin Harvey, sent Appellant a letter to formally address the lack of courtesy and decorum they perceived that Appellant displayed during the January 28 meeting during her questioning of the Superintendent about the budget. (R. 3 – 5).

On March 11, 2025, the local board by a vote of 7 – 4 (one absent) passed a Resolution to formally censure Appellant stating as follows:

¹See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dh9b9gyboWQ> at 3:33:02 - 3:48:36.

WHEREAS, [Appellant] exhibited a lack of courtesy and decorum during public discussion at the Board meeting on January 28, 2025, by engaging in rude and disrespectful conduct toward the Superintendent about the proposed FY2026 budget, and interrupting her when she was asked for clarification of a question; and

WHEREAS, [Appellant] engaged in these actions using a tone and manner that was perceived as uncivil and aggressive, both by other Board members and members of the public, who communicated their concern to the Board; and

WHEREAS, [Appellant's] actions were inconsistent with the Board's published standards and expectations and, if not addressed, could undermine the integrity and credibility of the Board as a whole, the Board's relationship with the Superintendent, and the Superintendent's effectiveness as the Board's chief executive officer....

(R. 23).

This appeal followed.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

In an appeal of a local board's decision to censure one of its members, the State Board will reverse the censure only if the censure is an "egregious abuse of discretion or [is] blatantly illegal and discriminatory." *Burroughs v. Prince George's Cnty. Bd. of Educ.*, MSBE Op. No. 11-23 (2011) (quoting 65 Op. Atty. Gen. 347, 350 (1980)).

LEGAL ANALYSIS

As a preliminary matter, we grant the local board's motion to strike the additional evidence Appellant submitted in support of her appeal beyond the evidence contained in the record submitted by the local board.² The additional evidence submitted by Appellant is not material to the issue in this matter as required by COMAR 13A.01.05.03C. *Shervon D. v. Howard Cnty. Bd. of Educ.*, MSBE Op. No. 17-10 (2017) (The State Board may review additional evidence if it is shown that the evidence is material to the issues in the case and there were good reasons for failure to offer the evidence in the proceedings before the local board pursuant to COMAR 13A.01.05.03C). The only evidence material in this matter is the evidence that relates to the Appellant's conduct during the January 28, 2025 board meeting when she was questioning the Superintendent about the FY 2026 Operating Budget.

²The State Board reviewed the official local board video of the meeting held on 1/28/25 at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dh9b9qyboWQ>. The Appellant's questioning begins at 3:33:02 and ends at 3:48:36.

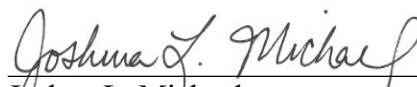
As to the merits of the appeal, a local board of education does not have the statutory authority to issue fines, suspensions, expulsions, or reprimands to its members. A local board does, however, have “the power to adopt a resolution that, while having no formal legal effect as a sanction, criticizes what the Board perceives as improper conduct.” *Burroughs v. Prince George’s Cnty. Bd. of Educ.*, MSBE Op. No. 11-23 (2011) (quoting 65 Op. Atty. Gen. 347, 350 (1980)). We have previously stated that reversing a censure decision from a local board would be appropriate only if the censure were an “egregious abuse of discretion or were blatantly illegal and discriminatory.” *Id.*

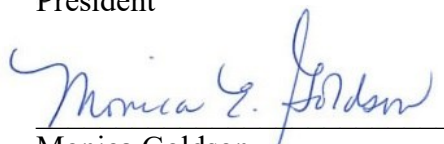
An abuse of discretion constitutes a “very high standard.” *Robin H. v. Montgomery Cnty. Bd. of Educ.*, MSBE Op. No. 16-14 (2016). An abuse of discretion occurs “where no reasonable person would take the view adopted” or when a body acts “without reference to any guiding rules or principles.” *Id.*, quoting *King v. State*, 407 Md. 682, 697 (2009). It also exists when the ruling is “violative of fact and logic” or is an “untenable judicial act that defies reason and works an injustice.” *Id.*

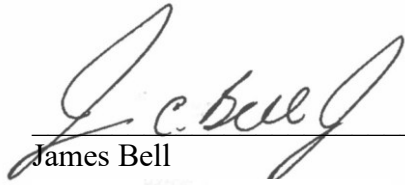
In *Kelley v. Queen Anne’s County Bd. of Educ.*, MSBE Op. No. 18-24, p. 6 (2018), we concluded that the censure resolution at issue in that case was “vague about what Appellant did to warrant censure” and we concluded that the record contained few facts upon which the board could base its decision. Here we view that the basis for censure is vague and not supported by facts supporting the board’s decision. We have viewed the recording of Appellant’s questioning of the Superintendent regarding specific items of the FY 2026 Operating Budget during the local board meeting, and we do not observe any behavior that was rude and disrespectful conduct toward the Superintendent which “exhibited a lack of courtesy and decorum” or “actions using a tone and manner that was perceived as uncivil and aggressive” towards the Superintendent. The video captures Appellant asking legitimate questions about the budget in a calm and professional manner during her limited and allotted time. We find that the censure based upon the tone and manner in how the Appellant asked her questions defies reason and, if upheld, would only impede open and relevant discussion and sidetrack local boards from governing on important educational matters, particularly on matters where there may be a difference of opinion.

CONCLUSION

For all of these reasons, we reverse the local board’s censure decision as an egregious abuse of discretion.

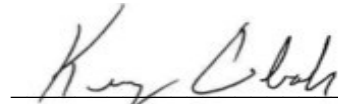

Joshua L. Michael
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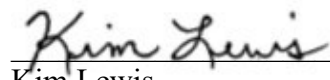

Chuen-Chin Bianca Chang

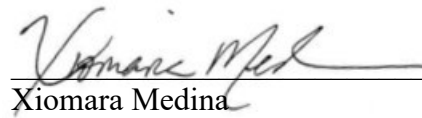

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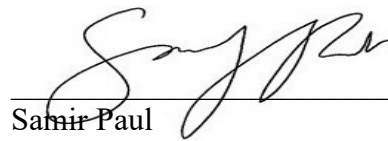

Kenny Clash


Nick Greer


Irma Johnson


Kim Lewis


Xiomara Medina


Samir Paul

Absent:
Rachel McCusker

August 26, 2025