

PUBLICATION OF REDACTED VERSION
OF THE OEIG FOR THE AGENCIES UNDER THE GOVERNOR
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Case Number: 23-01837

Subject(s): Dreena Jones

Below is the redacted version of an investigative summary report issued by the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor. Pursuant to section 20-50 of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Act) (5 ILCS 430/20-50), a summary report of an investigation is required to be issued by an executive inspector general when, and only when, at the conclusion of investigation, the executive inspector general determines reasonable cause exists to believe a violation has occurred. If a complaint is not to be filed with the Executive Ethics Commission (Commission) for adjudication of the alleged violation, the Act further requires the executive inspector general to deliver to the Commission a statement setting forth the basis for the decision not to file a complaint and a copy of the summary report of the investigation and of the response from the ultimate jurisdictional authority or agency head regarding the summary report. 5 ILCS 430/20-50(c-5). The Act requires that some summary reports be made available to the public and authorizes the Commission to make others available. 5 ILCS 430/20-52. Before making them available, however, the Commission is to redact from them information that may reveal the identity of witnesses, complainants, or informants and may redact “any other information it believes should not be made public.” 5 ILCS 430/20-52(b).

Some summary reports delivered to the Commission may contain a mix of information relating to allegations with respect to which the executive inspector general did and did not determine reasonable cause existed to believe a violation occurred. In those situations, the Commission may redact information relating to those allegations with respect to which the existence of reasonable cause was not determined.

The Commission exercises its publication responsibility with great caution and seeks to balance the sometimes-competing interests of transparency and fairness to the accused and others uninvolved. To balance these interests, the Commission has redacted certain information contained in this report and identified where said redactions have taken place and inserted clarifying edits as marked. Publication of a summary report of an investigation, whether redacted or not, is made

with the understanding that the subject or subjects of the investigation may not have had the opportunity to rebut the report's factual allegations or legal conclusions before issuance of the report. Moreover, there has not been, nor will there be, an opportunity for the subject to contest or adjudicate them before the Commission. The subject merely has the opportunity to submit a response for publication with the report.

The Commission received this report and a response from the ultimate jurisdictional authority and/or agency in this matter from the Agencies of the Illinois Governor Office of Executive Inspector General ("OEIG"). The Commission, pursuant to 5 ILCS 430/20-52, redacted the OEIG's final report and responses and mailed copies of the redacted version and responses to the Attorney General, the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor, and each subject.

The Commission reviewed all suggestions received and makes this document available pursuant to 5 ILCS 430/20-52. By publishing the below redacted summary report, the Commission neither makes nor adopts any determination of fact or conclusions of law for or against any individual or entity referenced therein.

– THE REDACTED VERSION OF THE EIG'S SUMMARY REPORT
BEGINS ON THE NEXT PAGE –

Office of Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

Investigation Case No. 23-01837



I. INTRODUCTION

Based on finding evidence of a State employee fraudulently obtaining a federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, the OEIG self-initiated a larger investigation to determine whether State employees properly obtained PPP loans and provided the required notice of outside employment.¹ The OEIG assigned the present case number to the investigation of a \$17,915 PPP loan obtained by Dreena Jones, while she was employed at the Illinois Capital Development Board (CDB).

II. BACKGROUND

Ms. Jones most recently² began working for CDB in 2020 and began her current role as an Administrator of Quality Assurance and Accountability in 2021. In addition to defining her Administrator title as supervisory in nature, the position description provides, in part, that the Administrator “[s]erve[s] as the agency’s Chief Accountability Officer, acting as the agency liaison to the Grants and Accountability and Transparency Unit (GATU), working closely with the Senior management and Executive staff to develop and implement policies and procedures for agency compliance with the Grants and Accountability and Transparency Act.”

The PPP was created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act and administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide relief to small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. PPP loans were made to eligible businesses, which included sole proprietorships and self-employed individuals, for qualifying payroll costs and business operating expenses such as insurance, rent, and utilities.³ To apply for the loan, a sole proprietor or self-employed individual needed to submit certain tax filings or other payroll documentation to an SBA-approved lender, establishing their eligibility and demonstrating the qualifying payroll amount, which as of March 2021 could be based on “gross income” reported on an IRS Form 1040, Schedule C.⁴ PPP loans were eligible for forgiveness by the SBA if used on qualifying expenses and if at least 60% was used for payroll costs.⁵

III. INVESTIGATION

A. PPP Records For Ms. Jones And CDB Personnel Information

The OEIG located public records from the SBA showing that Ms. Jones received a \$17,915 PPP loan in approximately April 2021 for a sole proprietorship. The OEIG subpoenaed loan documents from the lender, which included a PPP loan application for “Schedule C Filers Using Gross Income,” signed in Ms. Jones’ name and dated April 5, 2021. The “Sole proprietor” box

¹ From the OEIG’s review, in order to be eligible for at least \$20,000 in loan proceeds, the small business typically had approximately \$100,000 or more in yearly net profit or gross income. The OEIG may refer to the Ultimate Jurisdictional Authority those State employees who obtained PPP loans in smaller amounts or were not investigated for other logistical reasons.

² Ms. Jones previously worked for CDB from 2013 to 2019.

³ 15 U.S.C. § 636(a)(36); SBA Interim Final Rule, 85 FR 20811 (Apr. 15, 2020).

⁴ SBA Interim Final Rule, 86 FR 13149 (Mar. 8, 2021) (expanded definition of “payroll costs” for sole proprietors).

⁵ *See id.*; 15 U.S.C. § 636(m).

was checked, the Business Legal Name was listed as “Dreena Jones” with an establishment year of “2016,” and the business was categorized under a code for “Office of Real Estate Agents and Brokers.” Ms. Jones was identified as the primary contact for the business and the business is listed as having one employee including the owner. A box checked under “Purpose of the loan” reflected the loan was for payroll costs, rent/mortgage interest, covered supplier costs, utilities, covered operations expenditures and “license fees and membership costs.” The form contained various certifications, all reflecting the initials “DJ,” which included a statement that the applicant “was in operation on February 15, 2020...and was either an eligible self-employed individual, independent contractor, or sole proprietorship with no employees...”; a statement that the funds would be used as authorized by PPP rules; and a statement that information provided in the application and supporting documentation was “true and accurate in all material respects.” On the application, the gross income from tax year 2020 from the “IRS Form 1040, Schedule C, line 7” was identified as \$86,000. That figure was used to calculate the loan amount of \$17,915 (intended to cover a period up to 2.5 months).

A 2020 “Schedule C Profit or Loss From Business” form reflecting Ms. Jones as the proprietor was included in the loan documents. The Schedule C form reflected that the principal business was “Real Estate Agent (Realtor, Broker, Commercial, etc.)(531210)” and that the gross income for the business was \$86,000, the total expenses were \$4,370 and the net profit was \$81,630. The listed expenses included \$1,600 for advertising, \$620 for car and truck expenses, \$1,800 for legal and professional services, and \$350 for supplies.

A “Note” dated April 17, 2021, contained an electronic signature in Ms. Jones’ name for a loan in the amount of \$17,915. A PPP loan forgiveness application was dated September 21, 2021, and contained an electronic signature in Ms. Jones’ name, reflecting that the amount of the PPP loan spent on payroll costs was \$11,200 and requesting forgiveness of the full amount. The application included certifications that the borrower had complied with all requirements, including those related to eligible use of PPP loan proceeds, and that the information provided in the application was “true and correct in all material respects.” An SBA document, included in the lender documents, stated that the loan had been forgiven in full and including \$81.12 in interest on September 27, 2021.

The PPP loan documents for the “Dreena Jones” business reflected a business address, telephone number, and social security number (SSN) that matched Ms. Jones’ personal information that was listed in her CDB personnel file obtained by the OEIG.

B. Statements Of Economic Interests And Outside Employment Information

The Illinois Governmental Ethics Act⁶ requires certain State employees, including some CDB employees, to file annual Statements of Economic Interests (SEIs) regarding assets and income related to non-State business. The OEIG obtained and reviewed five SEIs filed in Ms. Jones’ name for the years that covered 2019 through 2023,⁷ and in each of the SEIs, no business

⁶ 5 ILCS 420/4A-101(f).

⁷ State employees submit SEI forms the year following the calendar year the economic interest occurred. This report’s references to the years of certain SEI forms are referring to the years in which the economic interests are reported to have occurred, not the year in which the forms were filed.

interests were listed as assets, nor were any sources of income from any business outside of State employment listed, except for her 2022 SEI (which covered the year 2021) wherein an investment property on [Street 1], [City 1], Illinois was reported. Other than this singular entry, every question on all five of the SEIs was answered with either the response “None” or “N/A.”

The OEIG also requested documentation from CDB reflecting any outside employment for Ms. Jones. CDB responded that there were no records on file. CDB’s outside employment policy directs that CDB employees “must discuss offers of outside employment that could present a real or perceived conflict of interest with their immediate supervisor. ... Employees must fill out the appropriate paperwork for any outside employment, whether paid or unpaid, that could present a real or perceived conflict of interest.”⁸

C. Professional Licenses

According to Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation public records, Ms. Jones holds an active license for “Licensed Real Estate Broker” and has held this license since 2015.

D. Online Research

A search of online records of the Illinois Secretary of State found that Dreena Jones is the listed registered agent for five limited liability corporations (LLCs): [Company 1]; [Company 2]; [Company 3]; [Company 4]; and [Company 5]. Ms. Jones’ registered agent address matched the address on the PPP loan application. Four of those LLCs have been involuntarily dissolved⁹ and one, [Company 5] is listed as “Active” with a registered effective date of November 1, 2023.

E. Ms. Jones’ OEIG Interview

On April 25, 2024, the OEIG interviewed Ms. Jones, who stated that she first worked for CDB as a Capital Planning Liaison from 2013 to 2019 when she left the State to work for the Chicago Public Schools. She said she returned to CDB in 2020 as a Capital Planning Liaison and has been in her current Administrator position since 2021. When asked if she had any outside employment or other sources of income, Ms. Jones responded in the affirmative and stated that she is a real estate broker, has a rental property and occasionally will start a business enterprise but that she has not yet had any success or profitability.

1. Ms. Jones’ Real Estate Broker Activities

Ms. Jones stated that she has been licensed as a real estate broker since 2015. She explained she had worked as an independent contractor for Coldwell Banker from 2015 through 2016 and

⁸ CDB Policy Manual, Section 11.7(I) Outside Employment.

⁹ Four of the five LLCs have been involuntarily dissolved by the Illinois Secretary of State: [Company 1] on November 18, 2013; [Company 2] on October 13, 2023; [Company 3] on December 9, 2022; and [Company 4] on September 8, 2023.

since 2016 has been an independent contractor for Real People Realty. Ms. Jones said that she was paid by both companies on a commission basis for sales completed. She reported that she received her commissions via check and there were no deductions for taxes or unemployment insurance because she was an independent contractor. Ms. Jones explained that the amounts she made on commission are gross amounts before she deducted expenses and that the amount of net profit she made on a sale depended on the amount of the commission check. She said her expenses would include things such as marketing, advertising, telephone, gas, membership fees, and association fees and that she would have those expenses every year whether she made any sales or not. Ms. Jones stated that she was always the buyer's agent and would have earned about a 3% commission for each sale. She indicated that she has had 3 sales in her time at Real People Realty and estimated that she made approximately \$5,000 in commissions in 2019, \$2,500 in 2021 and \$10,000 in 2022.¹⁰ Ms. Jones said she had made no commissions in 2020, 2023, or thus far in 2024. She added that she reports her real estate business on her individual income tax returns and that she prepares her own taxes using retail tax software and has done so since joining Real People Realty.

2. Ms. Jones' Rental Property

Ms. Jones said she has a rental property on [Street 1] in [City 1], Illinois, that she purchased in approximately 2003 and began renting in 2011. She told OEIG that her rental property had been continuously leased since 2011 except for a period of renovation she undertook during 2020. According to Ms. Jones she received \$900 per month (\$10,800/yr.) in rent from 2011 through 2020, no rent during the 2020 renovation period, and has received \$1,200 per month (\$14,400 per year) since 2021. She informed OEIG that she reports her rental income and expenses on her income tax returns and that her expenses would include plumbing, painting, landscaping, cleaning supplies, and annual HVAC cleaning. Ms. Jones added that one year she had to renovate a bathroom and replace the roof shingles.

3. Ms. Jones' Business Enterprises

Ms. Jones explained that she would occasionally register a Limited Liability Company (LLC) when she would come up with a business idea. She identified [Company 2] as a business she started in 2021 to sell canes and compression garments. Ms. Jones added that she had ordered and received those items but had made no more than \$300 from the business and that the remainder of her inventory was still in the basement of her home. She said that she had paid monthly [City 1] sales tax on the items she sold and reported the income on her tax returns. Ms. Jones explained that she had also registered [Company 1] in 2012, [Company 3] in 2022, [Company 4], in 2022¹¹ and [Company 5] in 2023, however, she reported that she had made no money from any of them.

¹⁰ An OEIG review of publicly available information found that a realtor page in Dreena Jones' name on a real estate marketplace website credits her with three successful sales (a 2018 sale with a listed closing price of \$180,000, a 2021 sale with a listed closing price of \$95,000, and a 2022 sale with a listed closing price of \$457,000). A 3% commission for each would have garnered Ms. Jones \$5,400, \$2,850, and \$13,710 in commissions respectively.

¹¹ Ms. Jones did not recall registering [Company 4], but also did not dispute that she had registered the entity or that she was the listed registered agent.

Ms. Jones informed OEIG that she did not maintain a separate business bank account and used her personal bank account for all her realtor, rental, and business enterprise income.

4. Ms. Jones' Outside Employment and Statements of Economic Interest

During her interview, Ms. Jones reported that she understood the CDB Manual to require employees to complete SEIs and report outside employment. She then provided the OEIG with a copy of an email with attachments that appeared to reflect that she had requested approval for outside employment with Coldwell Banker as a real estate broker. This request was submitted by Ms. Jones while she was in the position of Capital Planning Liaison in September 2015 and included an email response from her then supervisor that her request had been approved. She said that she did not report any of her LLCs to CDB because they were just ideas and not active businesses.

Ms. Jones was questioned as to the responses in her SEIs covering 2019 through 2023 to which she responded "N/A" or "None." She acknowledged that she had completed and signed each of the SEIs attesting that to the best of her knowledge and belief, she had given a true, correct, and complete statement of her economic interests. Ms. Jones explained that in 2015, she had initially reported [Company 1] on her SEI but was told by CDB Legal that she did not have to report it. She stated that based on what CDB Legal had told her about [Company 1], she did not report any of her other businesses on an SEI. Ms. Jones stated that she also initially listed her real estate broker business on her 2016 SEI, but that someone¹² in CDB Legal had told her that she did not have to list it because she was an independent contractor and that nothing she did with it related to State contracts. She reported that she disclosed her rental property on her 2022 SEI which covered the year 2021 because the form had changed and required her to report ownership of any single asset worth more than \$10,000. Ms. Jones explained that she did not report the rental property in other years because she either had gains of less than \$10,000 or had losses.

5. Ms. Jones' PPP Loan Application

Ms. Jones stated that when she first heard about the PPP, she did not believe she qualified for it, however, she received an email from the National Association of Realtors which said that she qualified for a PPP loan as an independent contractor. She confirmed that she had obtained a PPP loan in April 2021. Ms. Jones initially identified her real estate broker business as the enterprise for which she sought a PPP loan. She later qualified this statement saying that she intended the loan to be for both her real estate business and her rental property and had completed at least part of the application with both in mind.

Ms. Jones stated that she filled out the loan application online and sent in everything that the lender required. She said she applied for the loan on her own with no assistance from anyone and, when shown the loan application described above, confirmed that she had electronically initialed and signed the application. Ms. Jones said she initially submitted her form 1040 tax return to the lender, but the lender wanted her to complete a different form, "Schedule C Profit or Loss

¹² Ms. Jones could not recall who had given her this advice nor could she recall if the advice had been given via email or telephone.

From Business (Sole Proprietorship),” that she did not have. She said the lender provided her with the Schedule C and, although she did not know how to complete it, she placed her adjusted gross income from her Form 1040 on the Schedule C as her gross business income. When shown the 2020 Schedule C that was included with the PPP loan documents described above, Ms. Jones explained that the gross income listed as \$86,000 included her \$89,000 CDB salary less net losses from her realtor business, and her rental property for 2020. She said that the Schedule C submitted for the PPP loan does not accurately reflect her 2020 taxes. Later in the interview, Ms. Jones indicated that she has filed a Schedule C along with her tax returns every year since 2011. She stated she did not know why she had not entered the gross income amount from the Schedule C she had already filed with the IRS¹³, but that she should have, and she indicated that she should have paid more attention to the instructions for completing the loan application. Ms. Jones said she was not sure where the listed expenses on the Schedule C came from or whether they were accurate as she admitted that she provided those expenses from memory. She admitted that the gross income figure of \$86,000 does not accurately reflect her 2020 business income and that her loan application included false information about her business income.

Ms. Jones said she electronically signed the Note for the PPP loan, and that the loan amount of \$17,915 was deposited into her personal checking account. She said she used the loan proceeds for her rental property including mortgage payments and repairs and for her realtor expenses including membership fees and classes. Ms. Jones stated that all the loan proceeds had been expended.

Ms. Jones acknowledged having completed the loan forgiveness application herself on September 21, 2021. She acknowledged that the loan was forgiven in full with interest included on September 27, 2021.

Ms. Jones stated that no one had told her to include her CDB salary in the loan application and claimed that she had included it to show that she was able to pay the loan back. She maintained that she did not include her salary to increase the amount of loan funds she would receive. Ms. Jones also acknowledged that she knew that if she included only her business income on the loan application documents that she would have received less money than she did.

IV. ANALYSIS

The CDB Standards of Conduct provide that: “Conduct unbecoming an Agency employee, including conduct that may bring CDB into disrepute or reflects discredit upon the employee as a representative of CDB or that tends to impair the operation, efficiency, or integrity of CDB or the employee” will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including discharge.¹⁴ In addition, the State of Illinois Code of Personal Conduct provides that “A State Employee will conduct himself or herself . . . with integrity and in a manner that reflects favorably upon the State.”¹⁵

¹³ After her interview, on May 2, 2024, Ms. Jones contacted the OEIG via email and indicated that she had recalled why she had not entered the amounts as they appeared on her original Schedule C filed with the IRS. Ms. Jones informed the OEIG that she could not access that form at the time of the PPP loan application because her laptop containing the record had been “destroyed” by having a drink spilled on it.

¹⁴ CDB Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual, Standards of Conduct, 10.1(BB) General Guidelines.

¹⁵ Illinois Code of Personal Conduct, Conduct Unbecoming of a State Employee (2017 & March 17, 2021)

Ms. Jones acknowledged that she completed the PPP loan application and Schedule C form herself, obtained a PPP loan in 2021 for the real estate broker business, used the proceeds, and that the loan was forgiven in full by the SBA. The information in her loan documentation, however, was false. Ms. Jones' PPP loan application listed the 2020 gross income from an "Office of Real Estate Agents and Brokers" named "Dreena Jones" in an amount of \$86,000. In her interview, she admitted that her business did not earn \$86,000 in 2020, that in fact her real estate broker business had no income in 2020, and that this figure inaccurately included her CDB salary. Ms. Jones also claimed that she had obtained the PPP loan for her rental property enterprise, however, she acknowledged that she only received \$900 per month (\$10,800/yr.) from that property and did not receive any rent during the period it was under renovation in 2020. Also, Ms. Jones advised the OEIG that the Schedule C she had submitted with her PPP loan application was not the one she had submitted with her income tax return and that it contained her \$89,000 CDB salary less her net losses from her real estate broker business and her rental property.

Ms. Jones admitted that after being approved for the PPP loan, she spent the loan proceeds of \$17,915 in public funds, on mortgage payments and repairs of her rental property. She also admitted that she completed and submitted the forgiveness application, and that her loan was forgiven. Thus, Ms. Jones submitted a loan application with false information, received and spent the loan proceeds, and accepted forgiveness in full by the federal government. Based on the evidence, there is reasonable cause to believe that Ms. Jones violated CDB and State of Illinois policies on employee conduct.¹⁶

V. [REDACTED] AND RECOMMENDATION

Based on the evidence detailed above, the OEIG has determined **THERE IS REASONABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING:**

- [REDACTED] – Ms. Jones obtained a federal PPP loan based on falsified information in violation of CDB and State of Illinois policies on employee conduct.

Regardless of the ease of procuring these PPP funds, this was not free money for the taking. These loans, as with any other, required truthful information as a basis for approval. State employees are expected, at minimum, to maintain the public's trust and confidence. This expectation is especially true for someone in Ms. Jones' position as an Administrator of Quality Assurance and Accountability. Misappropriating such funds is far from being ethical, professional, acting with integrity, or conducting oneself in a manner that reflects favorably upon the State. Accordingly, the OEIG recommends that CDB terminate Ms. Jones.

In addition, the OEIG recommends that CDB revise its outside employment policy. Currently, the policy only requires employees to "discuss offers of outside employment that *could present* a real or perceived conflict of interest with their immediate supervisor" and to report outside employment that "*could present* a real or perceived conflict of interest."¹⁷ (emphasis

¹⁶ [Redacted].

¹⁷ CDB Policy Manual, Outside Employment 11.7(I).

added). As written, an employee could plausibly argue there is no requirement in the policy to obtain approval of their outside employment opportunity, if the employee does not believe that there is a conflict. It is preferable for the policy to simply require employees to report all proposed outside employment to CDB prior to accepting it. The agency, through its designee, should then make an objective assessment of whether the outside employment conflicts, or has the potential to conflict, with the employee's duties at CDB, or presents a risk of abuse of State time or resources, especially for employees working remotely. The current policy also has no directive requiring employees to renew the approval of their outside employment on an annual basis. Annual renewal of outside employment would allow CDB to periodically assess whether any alterations have occurred to either the employee's secondary employment or to the employee's duties at CDB that could present a conflict not otherwise apparent. Requiring yearly renewal also ensures that employees are reminded at least annually that they must comply with the outside employment policy. Additionally, the current policy does not require any notification to CDB when the outside employment has ended or there has been a change in employment conditions to the outside employment such as an adjustment in workdays or hours. A policy requiring these additional notifications within a defined timeframe of their occurrence would allow CDB to conduct a conflict analysis in a timely fashion.

Finally, the OEIG recommends that CDB ensure all employees are notified of any changes made to the outside employment policy so that all employees are on notice going forward.

Date: June 21, 2024

Office of Executive Inspector General
for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor
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By: Megan E. Morgan #143
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July 11, 2024

Susan M. Haling
Executive Inspector General
Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor
69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400
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Via Electronic Mail to Debbie Yang at: [REDACTED]@illinois.gov

Re: OEIG Case No. 23-01837

Dear Executive Inspector General Haling:

On June 21, 2024, I received the investigative report prepared by your office [REDACTED] that Capital Development Board ("CDB") Quality Assurance Administrator Dreena Jones fraudulently obtained a federal Paycheck Protection Program loan. Your office requested a response from CDB within 20 calendar days. Following your recommendation, we have terminated the employee, effective June 30, 2024. Please accept this letter as CDB's response.

As a result of the OEIG's investigation, we acknowledge and accept your recommendation to terminate Ms. Jones. Ms. Jones was given notice of her termination of employment with CDB on June 27, 2024, with an effective date of June 30, 2024 (due to CDB having an anticipated payroll system). As CDB's Quality Assurance Administrator, Ms. Jones was not a member of a bargaining unit with grievance rights.

Furthermore, we also acknowledge and accept your recommendation to revise our outside employment policy. CDB believes the OEIG's recommendations will bring CDB's written policies more in line with current practice at CDB. CDB has initiated an accounting of the outside employment status for all CDB employees. I sent an email to all staff earlier this week advising them of this accounting and their required participation. Additionally, CDB is in the process of updating the outside employment policies found in CDB's Policies and Procedures Manual, occurring in conjunction with an update of the entire Manual which was underway at the time I received the investigative report. CDB will provide an update to the OEIG when the internal outside employment accounting is complete, and when the revisions to the Policies and Procedures Manual have been made.

Please let us know if you need any additional information at this time. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to Amy Romano, CDB's General Counsel and Ethics Officer.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Tamakia J. Edwards
Executive Director
Capital Development Board

PUBLICATION OF REDACTED VERSION
OF THE OFFICE OF EXECUTIVE INSPECTOR GENERAL
FOR THE AGENCIES OF THE ILLINOIS GOVERNOR
INVESTIGATIVE REPORT

Case 23-01837


Subject(s): Dreena Jones

RESPONDENT'S SUGGESTIONS FOR REDACTION / PUBLIC RESPONSE

Please check the appropriate line and sign and date below. If no line is checked, the Commission will not make your response public if the redacted report is made public.

☒ Below is my public response. Please make this response public if the summary report is also made public; or

☐ Below are my suggestions for redaction. I do not wish for these suggestions to be made public.


Respondent's Signature

10/25/24
Date

Instructions: Please write or type suggestions for redaction or a public response on the lines below. If you prefer, you may attach separate documents to this form. Return this form and any attachments to:

EEC@illinois.gov

or

Illinois Executive Ethics Commission

401 S. Spring Street, Room 513 Wm. Stratton Building

Springfield, IL 62706

please see attached

I would like to thank the EEC for allowing me the opportunity to respond to this report. I had not been given that opportunity. I have been a public service employee for almost two decades and specifically with CDB for 10 years. My performance has always been rated as excellent. I worked to support every department, and I was promoted.

This report stated that I started in 2019 as the QAA but I was employed there since 2013. I have never participated in misconduct. I did nothing wrong deliberately, willfully to violate any policies. When I read this report, I was shocked. I really believed that the OEIG would have come back with a result of Unfounded. The CDB released me from duty before I could even view the report. There was no investigation from the CDB nor was I asked if the information was accurate. I believe the CDB could verify that some of the statements made were not true. For example, I reported my Real Estate Broker business to CDB and received authorization from my Supervisor that I was approved with comments from the Legal Department. However, the OEIG omitted that information by cutting off the previous years of employment in that statement. I was also told that Independent Contractors did not have to add that info to the SEI reports by the Legal Department. I was told to remove it when I initially added it. I reported when I had a gain over \$5,000. This report is laced with fallacy. For example, my various "enterprises". The various businesses that I started well after COVID included ideas inspired to help provide supplies for the elderly and provide vitamins for those suffering from long COVID symptoms. I decided to just give the products away as needed/requested. The investment property that I lease was rented to low-income families with children/foster children at low market rate and I never raise the rent to provide a stable environment. This is the person that I am. I guess no good deed goes unpunished.

After this report I was horrified but I went back to the SBA to have them review my loan. My Representative went over my loan and my taxes for the criteria years. She stated that many people made errors in the application process, but I was qualified to receive that loan, and I was fine. She also stated that the loan had been reviewed prior when forgiveness was requested.

I have several questions. Why am I being crucified and denied benefits? Why is my name being slandered? As far as misconduct goes, it's even in the report that it is recommended that CDB change the policies and procedures.. if that is not a clear indication that things were not properly explained, I don't know what is. I reported as I believed I should have. Is this retaliation for something (seeking my employment benefits maybe)? How many other people who sought help with their business during COVID(that were state employees) were fired and how many were able to retain their jobs? What were the specifics? When is this going to end? I was initially relieved of my duties for unbecoming behavior and told I would receive unemployment benefits but months after applying the CDB changed their reason to misconduct to prevent me from receiving benefits. I was released in June its almost November.

This report is defaming and is causing me stress and anxiety. I am not sure why my employer of 10 years would support this report without investigating and why deny me my unemployment benefits. I am praying to maintain my sanity and for this situation to be rectified. This has been heartbreaking. I miss my CDB family.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide my response and to briefly note that there are several false and inaccurate statements in this report. Dreena Jones