



OFFICE OF THE STATE INSPECTOR GENERAL

BRIAN P. KEMP
Governor

DEBORAH WALLACE
State Inspector General

January 28, 2020

Via Hand Delivery

Chairman Scott Sweeney
State Board of Education
205 Jesse Hill Drive SE
East Tower- Suite 2070
Atlanta, GA 30334

RE: OIG File No. 20-0121

Dear Chairman Sweeney:

On January 22, 2020 the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) received correspondence from you on behalf of the State Board of Education requesting that OIG further investigate allegations contained within the Georgia Department of Education auditor's report regarding the Chief Turnaround Office ("CTO Audit"). After review of the 64-page CTO Audit and supporting documents, OIG concurs with the findings and recommendations. Notably, the OIG agrees with the conclusions that Dr. Thomas inappropriately interfered with the request for proposal (RFP) process by instructing staff to choose specific vendors. Dr. Thomas also incorrectly applied the Statewide Travel Policy, which resulted in nonpayment of qualifying reimbursable travel expenses for multiple employees. Overall, it appears that the Chief Turnaround Office was mismanaged and that policies and procedures in place were routinely ignored by Dr. Thomas.

The CTO Audit findings are well supported by documentation and were thoroughly investigated by DOE staff; therefore, there is no need for OIG to duplicate these efforts. OIG is declining to conduct an administrative investigation. The jurisdiction and authority of the OIG does not extend to matters relating to employment, specifically when such matters are pending before an administrative body; thus, the OIG cannot investigate any allegations relating to comments or actions of CTO staff of a harassing, threatening, discriminatory, or racially based nature. However, due to Dr. Thomas' actions to override internal controls surrounding the RFP process, OIG is opening an investigation to determine whether state laws were violated and has met with the Office of the Attorney General's Prosecution Division. OIG recommends that the State Board of Education immediately implement the recommendations noted in the CTO Audit, reimburse employees for unpaid travel, and take swift, prompt employment action regarding Dr. Thomas.

Sincerely,

Deborah Wallace
Inspector General