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*VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL*

Commissioner Scott Britton  
Chair, Finance Subcommittee on Litigation  
111 N Clark Street  
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***Calabrese, Frank v. Cook County Board of Review, et al.***

Commissioner Britton:

The State's Attorney's Office has negotiated this agreement through lies, deception, and bad faith, and is now bullying me with ridiculous agreement terms. The evidence is overwhelming as supported by thousands of emails, texts, and reports that Samantha Steele and Dan Balanoff retaliated against me because I spoke to the Board of Review's general counsel in response to Samantha Steele demanding that I disseminate internal, non-public tax information regarding the Chicago Bears property in Arlington Heights. She then further retaliated against me when internal and external OIIG investigations began over the initial retaliation episode and fired me. The OIIG report, in IIG24-0144, last week corroborates a small portion of my claims, and the *Chicago Tribune* and *Daily Herald* name me as the employee witness interviewed in the report. My 30-page lawsuit chronicles the absurd harassment I endured as Samantha Steele and Dan Balanoff fabricated multiple disciplinary reports against me, demoted me, canceled my state conference presentation, and fired me. Furthermore, Samantha Steele and Dan Balanoff additionally retaliated against me because I refused to engage in their petty political crusade against their fellow Commissioners. I refused to send spiteful, political press releases against Commissioner Rogers and Commissioner Cardenas during election time on topics that had nothing to do with Cook County property taxes. As such, Samantha Steele called me insubordinate.

The State's Attorney's Office is supposed to act in the interest of justice. Justice clearly warrants my reinstatement as a Cook County Board of Review employee, as the alternative result would be absurd. For reasons unknown to me, the State's Attorney is opposing my reinstatement. Under the State's Attorney's twisted logic, I should have disseminated non-public tax documents and engaged in political activity on government time; if I had done so, I would currently be a Cook County employee. Furthermore, the State's Attorney is forcing me to agree to a confidentiality clause, which I absolutely refuse. I should be able to openly and truthfully speak about my absurd experience. I refuse to be muzzled about a purely public matter. Moreover, the State's Attorney is making me retract FOIA requests, which has no place in an employment dispute and is likely not even enforceable. This is in retaliation for a pending FOIA Public Access Counselor opinion, likely in my favor.

Furthermore, it has come to my attention that this agreement has been negotiated in bad faith. From my understanding, Commissioner Cardenas and Commissioner Rogers initially supported reinstatement as a condition of any settlement. They held this position because I was a very valuable employee to the Board of Review at large, and because Samantha Steele's actions were outside the bounds of acceptable behavior. Samantha Steele knew this, so she devised a deceitful and malicious strategy to prevent my reinstatement. She claimed during internal Board of Review negotiations that she had "text messages" from me that showed I disparaged Commissioner Cardenas in extreme terms. I have thoroughly examined my current and former cellular phones, going back four years of text messages with Samantha Steele. I have found no text message in which I disparage Commissioner Cardenas in such terms. I am very offended by this behavior by Commissioner Steele, as I have great respect for Commissioner Cardenas and have worked with him and his staff on a wide variety of projects over many years. Samantha Steele's false accusation against me evidently worked, as the State's Attorney's Office did not recommend reinstatement. Samantha Steele is actively blacklisting me from employment at the Cook County Board of Review in retaliation for this lawsuit. She has previously contacted Cook County officials at the Assessor's Office and property tax appeal attorneys to specifically disparage me. She is engaged in an active campaign to prevent me from finding employment because I was a witness in OIIG investigations against her and filed a lawful employment lawsuit against her. As such, I believe justice requires reinstatement.

I am very disappointed that the State's Attorney Office has treated me less than human during this episode. They have needlessly delayed the process, as I have been earnestly waiting for reinstatement. I have drained my savings in the process. I should not be forced to change my career and be blacklisted from Cook County government because of the clearly illegal actions of Samatha Steele. By proposing a confidentiality statement, removing my FOIA rights, and refusing reinstatement, the States's Attorney Office has prioritized Samantha Steele's feelings and political career over my rights, the Cook County ethics ordinance, the laws of this Country. I am appalled.

Therefore, I ask the Committee to approve the financial aspect of the agreement but (1) remove any confidentiality clause, (2) remove any clause affecting my FOIA rights, and (3) reinstate me to the Cook County Board of Review.

Sincerely,

Frank Calabrese

CC: Commissioner Bill Lowry  
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