



**JASPER COUNTY  
SCHOOL DISTRICT**

**BOARD OF EDUCATION**

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**Joyce Gerald**  
*Board Chair*

**Carolyn Bolden**  
*Vice Chair*

**Tom Balliet**  
*Secretary*

August 1, 2025

The Honorable Ellen Weaver  
State Superintendent of Education  
849 Learning Lane  
West Columbia, South Carolina 29172

Dear Superintendent Weaver:

The Jasper County School District Board of Education is in receipt of your correspondence dated July 28, 2025, advising of your state-of-education emergency declaration in the Jasper County School District.

Prior to receiving your communication, as a Board we have discussed our struggles as they relate to our relationship with one another; however, through it all, everyone has remained steadfast in our commitment to making the right decisions as it relates to the District's educational programs and advancing student achievement. This is evidenced by the improvement on the District's recent annual State Report Card as well as the Board working together to ensure that the community supported the bond referendum which was successfully passed so that our children would have more educational opportunities.

When the initial declaration for fiscal watch was made on March 24, 2023, we understood it was made because of the District's audit was not provided within 60 days of the December 1 deadline. During that timeframe, the District's Office of Finance had incurred a number of vacancies during COVID and we struggled to find qualified individuals for those positions and in September 2022, our Chief Financial Officer resigned. In light of the guidance issued by the State Department of Education, there was no objection to receiving technical assistance from the SCDE. Unfortunately, the designations continued and escalated to fiscal caution and fiscal emergency. Under these categories, the guidance states that the SCDE is required to visit, inspect, and conduct performance audits of a district. In December 2024, the State Board approved the SCDE's recommendation to take over financial operations of the district. The Board understands the department may maintain financial operations until the District is released from fiscal emergency. Recently, the Board learned that the District's records are not auditable and additional personnel have been brought in to assist with getting the records in order. The Board is very appreciative of the assistance that is being provided to the District and looks forward to our Finance Department retuning to state standards.

The State Inspector General met with the Board on July 10, 2025, to review their findings and recommendations. The report's findings detail concerns regarding the Board's supervision of former Superintendent Rechel Anderson and specifies suggested recommendations for this Board but also recognizes that the SCDE may want to assure similar practices are followed in other school districts as well. Although the Board has not submitted a response to the report, the Board is fully aware that, based on the financial issues and



concerns with the former superintendent certain changes must be implemented with all due haste. We can assure you that our oversight of our next superintendent will be implemented in accord with the recommendations specified such as signing an attestation, ensuring that there is no supermajority provision, and that the residency provision is followed, among others. Further, there is no objection to ensuring that a qualified CFO is hired.

Some of the findings were very shocking to this Board. We were not aware that our former superintendent had an employee/employer relationship with Cognia. Cognia, however, knew their relationship with the former superintendent. From the Board's perspective, the State Board of Education regulations allow for two options for accreditation. Cognia is an option approved by the State Board. This District, like the majority of the school districts in the State, pursued the Cognia option. We are deeply troubled that the accreditation status we sought after for our students' success is now being called into question, particularly when the District was compliance monitored by the SCDE and received an all clear status.

As you may be aware, the Board began searching for a new superintendent in March 2025. We have been thoughtful and diligent about this process, including hiring a very experienced executive search firm to assist with the process. We have involved the community in the process and all finalists are aware of the Office of the Inspector General's report and understand what the expectations will be for the District's next leader going forward. In addition, the reports have now been forwarded to the appropriate law enforcement agencies and ethics commission. We are now awaiting a determination as to whether any action will be taken by these bodies.

On behalf of the Board, I respectfully request that you consider our willingness to address the concerns identified by the IG and work cooperatively with the SCDE while under fiscal emergency status. I can assure you that we are committed to continuing on the path to improve our financial status, maintain our accreditation, and secure an educational leader fully devoted to the Jasper County School District. We simply ask for time to prove our commitment prior to the state declaring a state-of-education emergency.

Please accept this correspondence in the spirit in which it is offered, and we hope that our response to your letter provides you with additional perspective on this matter.

Sincerely yours,



Joyce Gerald  
Board Chair

c: All Board Members  
The Honorable Henry McMaster, Governor  
The Honorable Rita Allison, State Board of Education Chair  
The Honorable Greg Hembree, Senate Education Chair  
The Honorable Shannon Erickson, House Education & Public Works Chair  
Jasper County Legislative Delegation  
Dr. Sam Whack, Jr., Jasper County School District Interim Superintendent