



MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION

Richard P. Henry
Inspector General

Sean T. Chaney
Deputy Inspector General

January 28, 2026

MEMORANDUM

DELIVERED VIA EMAIL: dyann.mack@hcps.org

To: Dr. Dyann R. Mack, Ed.D.
Interim Superintendent
Harford County Public Schools
102 S. Hickory Ave
Bel Air, Maryland 21014

RE: OIGE Case: 25-0015-I

Dear Dr. Mack,

The Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (OIGE) has completed its investigation of the Harford County Public Schools (HCPS). Our findings and recommendations are included in the attached Investigative Synopsis.

OIGE requests that you, or your designee, provide a written response as to recommendations made and action(s) taken on or before Wednesday, February 25, 2026.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you have any questions or concerns.

Respectfully,

Richard P. Henry
Inspector General

Enclosure

Cc: Lauren Paige, President, HCPS Board of Education (BOE)
Kimberly H. Neal, Esq., HCPS General Counsel
Laura J. Tucholski, CPA, HCPS Chief Auditor

Yvonne Rallo, HCPS BOE Administrative Assistant
Members At Large, HCPS BOE
Dr. Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D., President – State Board of Education
Dr. Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools - MSDE



MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION



Investigative Synopsis

OIGE Case 25-0015-I

Issued: January 28, 2026



MARYLAND OFFICE OF THE
INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR EDUCATION
Richard P. Henry, Inspector General



January 28, 2026

To the Citizens of Maryland and Harford County,

The General Assembly, at its First Session after the adoption of the Maryland Constitution, established throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools and shall provide by taxation or otherwise for their maintenance.¹ The Maryland Office of the Inspector General for Education (OIGE) plays a crucial role in protecting State funds allocated to local school systems. Our primary goal is to prevent and uncover fraud, waste, abuse, and educational mismanagement within School Boards, the Maryland State Department of Education, the Interagency Commission of School Construction, the twenty-four (24) local education agencies, and non-public schools that receive State funding across Maryland.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The OIGE received numerous complaints alleging that Lawrence Smith, a former Baltimore City Public Schools Police Officer under federal indictment, was employed by Harford County Public Schools (HCPS) as a substitute teacher and, in October 2025, as a full-time teacher at Edgewood Middle School. It is further alleged that members of the HCPS Human Resources knew of the pending charges but failed to disqualify Smith due to teacher shortages. Our investigation focused on whether Smith truthfully reported his background on his applications to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and HCPS.

Background

Smith began as a Baltimore City School Police Officer in 2005 and was promoted to detective in 2016. He scheduled and managed City Schools Police Officer overtime, including his own. While working as a Baltimore City School Police Officer, he also served as the Head Football Coach at Dunbar High School from 2007 until 2023, when he was arrested and indicted.

Smith was indicted by a federal grand jury in the United States District Court of Maryland on February 7, 2023.² The 15-count indictment charged him with 11 counts of Wire Fraud, three counts of Tax Evasion, and one count of Making a False Return.

¹ Constitution of Maryland, Article VIII, Education, Section 1

² Baltimore School Police Officer Facing Federal Charges for Overtime Fraud and Tax Violations (January 15, 2025) <https://www.justice.gov/usao-md/pr/baltimore-school-police-officer-facing-federal-charges-overtime-fraud-and-tax-violations>

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

v.

LAWRENCE E. SMITH,

Defendant.

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CRIMINAL NO. *SAG-23-312*

(Wire Fraud, 18 U.S.C. § 1343; Aiding
and Abetting, 18 U.S.C. § 2; Attempt to
Evade or Defeat Tax, 26 U.S.C. § 7201;
Making a False Return 26 U.S.C.
§ 7206(1))

INDICTMENT

On October 17, 2025, while employed with HCPS, Smith pleaded guilty to one count of wire fraud and one count of tax evasion.

Offense(s) of Conviction

1. The Defendant agrees to plead guilty to Count One of the Indictment, which charges the Defendant with Wire Fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1343, and Count Twelve of the Indictment which charges Income Tax Evasion, in violation of 26 U.S.C. § 7201. The Defendant admits that the Defendant is, in fact, guilty of these offenses and will so advise the Court.

Maryland State Department of Education Teacher Licensure

MSDE is responsible for issuing teacher licenses in Maryland. All teacher licensure candidate applications in Maryland are submitted through the online portal, The Educator Application and Credentialing Hub (TEACH). MSDE currently offers the following professional licenses: Temporary Professional, Initial Professional, Professional, Advanced Professional, and Conditional. A conditional license is a non-renewable license issued to an employee while they pursue a pathway to professional licensure.

Harford County Public Schools Policy

HCPS utilizes an online portal for candidates to apply for vacant positions within the school district. Each candidate answers the questions assigned to the applicable job category and uploads their relevant certificates and documents.

Investigation

Laws and Policies - Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR)

Regarding applying for and qualifying for a conditional teaching license, COMAR 13A.12.02.022³ (E) States:

³ COMAR 13A.12.02.02. Licenses for Teachers

E. Conditional.

- (1) *A conditional license is valid for 5 years and may not be renewed.*
- (2) *A local school system, State-operated school, or nonpublic school approved under COMAR 13A.09.10 shall request a conditional license only if the school cannot fill a position with an individual who qualifies for a permit under regulation .03 of this chapter*
- (3) *A conditional license may only be issued to an individual who possesses a bachelor's degree or higher.*
- (4) *An applicant who is issued a conditional license shall pursue a pathway to professional licensure*

COMAR 13A.12.02.03 further explains the MSDE-approved pathways for teacher licensure. Outlining the requirements that candidates must meet to be eligible for a conditional licensure. COMAR does not list or reference a candidate's criminal background or pending charges when applying for a teacher's license.

As it relates to a candidate not qualifying for or being denied a teaching license in Maryland, within COMAR Sec. 13a.12.06.02⁴ states:

C. Suspension, Revocation, or Denial. The State Superintendent of Schools shall suspend, deny, or revoke a license if the license holder or applicant:

- (1) *Pleads guilty or nolo contendere with respect to, receives probation before judgment with respect to, or is convicted of, a crime involving:*
 - (a) *Contributing to the delinquency of a minor;*
 - (b) *Moral turpitude⁵ if the offense bears directly on the individual's fitness for employment in education;*
 - (c) *Sexual offense in the third or fourth degree; or*
 - (d) *A controlled dangerous substance offense...*

⁴ COMAR Sec. 13a.12.06.02. Grounds for Disciplinary Action or Denial

⁵ Moral turpitude means, in general, shameful wickedness — so extreme a departure from ordinary standards of honesty, good morals, justice, or ethics as to be shocking to the moral sense of the community. It has also been defined as an act of baseness, vileness, or depravity in the private and social duties which one person owes to another, or to society in general, contrary to the accepted and customary rule of right and duty between people. 50 Am. Jur. 2d Libel and Slander § 165, at 454 (1995)

Black's Law Dictionary (12th ed. 2024), moral turpitude (17c) 1. Conduct that is contrary to justice, honesty, or morality; esp., an act that demonstrates depravity. In the area of legal ethics, offenses involving moral turpitude — such as fraud or breach of trust — traditionally make a person unfit to practice law.

Document Review - MSDE Teaching License

OIGE obtained Smith's teaching license application, which he submitted to MSDE on February 3, 2025. Within this application, MSDE has four required questions related to a candidate's background and criminal history:

1. *Is action pending to suspend, revoke, or deny your credential or application for a credential in another state? (A determination of academic ineligibility is not considered a denial of a credential)*
2. *Have you ever had a credential or license revoked, suspended, voluntarily surrendered or denied by any state other than Maryland? (A determination of academic ineligibility is not considered a denial of a credential).*
3. *Have you ever resigned or been dismissed after notice of allegations of misconduct involving a student?*
4. *Have you ever been convicted of, pleaded guilty or nolo contendere with respect to, or received probation before judgment with respect to a crime against children, a crime of violence*, or a crime of moral turpitude**?*

Note: The explanations below are embedded in the MSDE Application and address “*” a Crime of Violence and “**” a Crime of Moral Turpitude.

**If you are unsure whether a crime is a “crime of violence,” please err on the side of disclosure as filing false or misleading information on an application for a credential may be grounds to deny a credential request. Crime of violence is defined in the Maryland Code Criminal Law Article Section 14-101.*

***Crimes of moral turpitude include bribery, burglary, counterfeiting, embezzlement, forgery, fraud, making false statements to a law enforcement officer, perjury, sexual offenses, theft, and any felony offense.*

Smith answered “no” to question number four on February 3, 2025. Smith was neither convicted nor had he pled guilty or nolo contendere to his pending charges. There are no further references to background or pending charges on the MSDE teacher licensure application.

Document Review - HCPS Substitute and Teacher Applications

Smith submitted three applications to HCPS. His initial application as a substitute teacher was submitted on September 18, 2024. He later submitted a Long-Term Substitute Teacher application on November 26, 2024, and a third application for Classroom Teacher on December 3, 2024.

HCPS has seven questions related to the candidate's criminal background, pending charges, and court dispositions. The questions are:

1. *Have you ever been convicted or received probation before judgment for a crime? (Do not include minor traffic violations for which a fine of \$100 or less was imposed.)*
2. *Have you ever been charged with a crime and/or are awaiting trial?*

3. *Have you ever been dismissed, asked to resign, or refused reemployment?*
4. *Have you ever been investigated by Child Protective Services or a similar agency with regard to allegations related to child abuse or neglect?*
5. *In any previous employment experience, have you ever received an oral or written reprimand?*
6. *Have you ever had your certificate suspended or revoked in this state or any other?*
7. *If your answer to any of the six questions is "yes", please provide details.*

In the substitute teacher application, the candidate answered “YES” to question two and responded to question seven with the words “Waiting to go to court for a tax case.” In the Long-Term Substitute Application, Smith answered “YES” to question two and did not provide any details or explanation under question seven. Lastly, in his teacher’s application, he answered question two affirmatively, but as he did on the Long-Term Substitute Application, he did not provide any details for question seven.

Interviews

OIGE interviewed HCPS Employee 1, a member of the internal investigation team. HCPS Employee 1's responsibilities include conducting background checks, fingerprinting, and issuing photo identification to candidates. They further explained that, in their role, they do not have access to view candidate applications. They also reported processing of over 1,300 applicants in 2025.

The OIGE inquired about an email exchange that began on September 20, 2024, regarding Smith’s Substitute Teacher Application. During the exchange, HCPS Employee 1 forwarded Smith's responses to the criminal background portion of his application to HCPS Employee 2. HCPS Employee 1 informed a colleague on the Talent Management Team who is responsible for onboarding candidates that they would reach out to Smith regarding his “yes” response to question two on his application. On September 26, 2024, HCPS Employee 1 replied in the email that Smith was good to proceed.

From: [REDACTED]@hcps.org>
Sent: Thursday, September 26, 2024 10:15 AM
To: [REDACTED]@hcps.org>
Cc: [REDACTED]@hcps.org>
Subject: RE: BG - para sub applicant

I have spoken with him, he is good to proceed.

During the interview, the OIGE clarified how they knew he was good to proceed, and HCPS Employee 1 explained, “The only thing I can say is that there is a note that I put that said theft charge and to keep us notified of court dates.”

This note was a typed message from the staff member to themselves, dated October 2, 2024, that stated,

10/2/2024

Lawrence Smith

Disclosed pending charges for theft. Advised can proceed to sub, but must be kept apprised of court dates and findings.

OIGE then reviewed a Criminal Justice Information Services (CJIS) printout from October 2, 2024, for Smith, in which “OK, Misdemeanor” is handwritten.

October 02, 2024

Your request for a criminal history record check has been conducted. Information from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), based upon the fingerprint supported identification information indicated below, has been reviewed.

Name: LAWRENCE EARL SMITH
Sex: M Race: B Date of Birth: REDACTED

The covered individual is the subject of a criminal charge/charges.
See attached sheet for more information.

The Maryland Criminal Justice Information System is operated under the authority of the Secretary of the Department of Public Safety and Correctional Services and does not contain data prior to 1978.

SIGNATURE
REDACTED

OK Misdemeanor

HCPS Employee 1 confirmed that the handwriting was theirs. As it relates to the note on the CJIS form HCPS Employee offered,

“There was a discussion I may have had with him that said he may have said I’m going to get this pled down its charges, but I’m making guesses here, I’m not saying I remember it it’s not a question that’s vivid in my head.”

The staff members also reported that they did not know Smith and could not recall any interactions with him, either electronically or in person.

According to the federal criminal statute⁶, a felony is defined as any federal criminal offense punishable by a maximum term of imprisonment of more than one year. OIGE found that all of the crimes for which Smith had been indicted carried a penalty of more than a year.

⁶ 18 U.S. Code § 3156 - Definitions

OIGE asked why HCPS Employee 1, after reviewing the CJIS printout, wrote “ok, misdemeanor” as the classification for the charges Smith was facing.

NAME USED-SMITH,LAWRENCE EARL
CHARGE 1-2608 - FRAUD BY WIRE - 18 USC 1343: WIRE FRAUD
CHARGE 2-4807 - REFUSING TO AID OFFICER - 18 USC 2: AIDING & ABETTI
NG
CHARGE 3-6101 - INCOME TAX - 26 USC 7201: ATTEMPTING TO EVADE OR DE
FEAT TAX

END OF PART 2 - PART 3 TO FOLLOW
PART 3
- FBI IDENTIFICATION RECORD - FBI UCN-K7DDAFPA4
CHARGE 4-4803 - MAKING FALSE REPORT - 26 USC 7206 (1): MAKING A FAL
SE RETURN

HCPS Employee 1 explained that they relied on Smith's statements to explain the items listed on the printout, rather than conducting further research or inquiring about the nature of the charges.

FINDINGS

- 1) OIGE found that applicant Smith answered the MSDE questionnaire truthfully when he completed his teaching license application. Our findings are based on the date that he applied and the questions contained in the application. Although Smith had been indicted by a federal grand jury, he had not been convicted at the time the application was submitted.
- 2) OIGE found that Smith failed to provide HCPS staff with accurate details of his pending 15-count federal indictment. Smith described the charges as "theft" and "tax case" related, downplaying the seriousness of the federal charges.
- 3) OIGE found that the MSDE teacher licensure application does not require applicants to disclose any pending criminal charges. The application requires applicants to disclose 1) whether their teaching credentials had been suspended, revoked, or denied in another state; 2) whether they had been dismissed after notice of allegations of misconduct involving a student; and 3) whether they had been convicted of, pleaded guilty or nolo contendere, or received probation for a crime against a child, a crime of violence, or a crime of moral turpitude. Although MSDE is not the applicant's primary employer, it does serve as the repository, clearinghouse, and issuer of teaching licenses throughout the state. Additionally, the MSDE questionnaire includes a legal reference that is rarely used and difficult for an applicant to understand.
- 4) OIGE found in this case that HCPS staff relied more on the applicants' explanations of their criminal charges and did not take any additional steps to research the charges listed on the FBI form. Except for 18 U.S.C. § 2⁷, a simple Google search or consultation with HCPS Legal Counsel would have shown that the remaining charges for which the applicant had been indicted were, in fact, felonies, not the lesser misdemeanor offenses staff relied on.

⁷ 18 U.S.C. §2 is not an independent felony, but rather a statute that makes anyone who assists in a federal crime punishable as a principal. There must be an underlying federal offense for this statute to apply.

- 5) OIGE found that the employment application form used by HCPS contains an affirmative statement that precludes employment only if any information is misrepresented, falsified, or omitted. Unlike the Under the Penalty of Perjury statement used by MSDE, an applicant who HCPS finds to be false cannot be criminally charged.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1) OIGE recommends that HCPS review its policies and procedures governing the hiring of applicants and establish acceptable prior criminal history thresholds. HCPS should clearly define which convictions will disqualify an applicant, in accordance with federal and state laws and student safety. Applicants should be evaluated based on the nature-time-nature assessment principle: the nature of the crime, the time elapsed since the conviction, and the relevance to the job responsibilities.
- 2) OIGE recommends that HCPS review its background check procedures and implement a policy requiring comprehensive background checks for all applicants. This includes federal, state, and county agencies, as well as searches of the national and state sex offender registries.
- 3) OIGE recommends that HCPS implement policies and procedures for periodic, ongoing background checks of current employees to ensure continued compliance and student safety. This policy should also include a self-reporting requirement for school personnel to ensure ongoing safety for staff and students.
- 4) OIGE recommends that HCPS implement a legal review process and consult with school legal counsel to ensure that policies comply with federal, state, and local laws governing how an applicant's criminal history is used in the hiring process.
- 5) OIGE recommends that HCPS establish a self-disclosure requirement for all new hires that requires applicants to sign an "Under the Penalty of Perjury" statement disclosing any pending charges or prior convictions during the initial application process.
- 6) OIGE recommends that MSDE review its policies and procedures in response to Findings 1 and 2 of the January 2026 Office of Legislative Audit Report - MSDE⁸ regarding disqualifying criminal backgrounds. Like the OLA report, OIGE found that MSDE lacked a comprehensive procedure to ensure that individuals with disqualifying criminal backgrounds were not employed by LEAs.

The recommendations in this report aim to support HCPS in continuing its efforts to create a safer, more stable, and legally compliant school safety environment, even as broader workforce challenges persist. By adopting these measures and ensuring proper training and protocols, HCPS can greatly enhance the safety and security of employment for staff and students.

OIGE recognizes that information may be updated or changed after an investigation is finished. OIGE thanks the staff of the Harford County Public School system and the Harford County Public Schools – Office of Internal Audit for their cooperation during this investigation.

⁸ Office of Legislative Audits, Department of Legislative Services, Audit Report - Maryland State Department of Education, January 2026, <https://ola.maryland.gov/Search/Report>

Respectfully,



Richard P. Henry
Inspector General

Cc: Lauren Paige, President, HCPS Board of Education (BOE)
Kimberly H. Neal, Esq., HCPS General Counsel
Laura J. Tucholski, CPA, HCPS Chief Auditor
Yvonne Rallo, HCPS BOE Administrative Assistant
Members At Large, HCPS BOE
Dr. Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D., President – State Board of Education
Dr. Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools - MSDE