

CITY OF NEW YORK
THE SPECIAL COMMISSIONER OF INVESTIGATION
FOR THE NEW YORK CITY SCHOOL DISTRICT

80 MAIDEN LANE, 20TH FLOOR
NEW YORK, NEW YORK 10038

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
SPECIAL COMMISSIONER

Telephone: (212) 510-1400
Fax: (212) 510-1550
WWW.NYCSCI.ORG

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

March 15, 2023

Hon. David C. Banks
Chancellor
New York City Public Schools
Department of Education
52 Chambers Street, Room 314
New York, NY 10007

Re: Bridgit Bardio
SCI Case #: 2021-2179

Dear Chancellor Banks:

An investigation conducted by this office has substantiated that New York City Department of Education (“DOE”) School Aide Bridgit Bardio (“Bardio”), assigned to Hillcrest High School (“HHS”) in Queens, performed work for a car dealership in Queens from September 2020 until February 2021 – during which time, she was also paid by the DOE to work remotely from home.¹

I. Investigation and Findings:

The investigation began in June 2021, when the office of the Special Commissioner of Investigation for the New York City School District (“SCI”) received an online complaint of misconduct against Bardio. In the complaint, [REDACTED] reported that, in the course of requesting information regarding her DOE work hours from [REDACTED], Bardio revealed that from August 3, 2020 until February 8, 2021, she worked at Star Hyundai from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Consequently, these hours overlapped with her DOE work hours as a school aide.

SCI investigators spoke with [REDACTED] who recounted that he had been informed by [REDACTED] that Bardio worked at Star Hyundai during the same work hours when she worked as a DOE school aide.² [REDACTED] explained that Bardio was a

¹ Bardio was not reassigned during the pendency of SCI’s investigation and there is no problem code associated with her personnel file.

² [REDACTED] notified [REDACTED] about the matter. [REDACTED] provided the assigned investigator with a blank copy of the online timekeeping form to be completed by all staff weekly during COVID.

“remote only employee,” because Bardio sought an accommodation to work from home through the Self-Service Online Leave Application System (“SOLAS”), and her request had been approved.³

In an interview with SCI investigators, ██████████ stated that on June 8th, Bardio sent an email to ██████████ and requested her summer pay amounts in order to adjust her unemployment benefits request. According to ██████████ Bardio stated that she collected unemployment benefits from another job Bardio had performed during the pandemic.⁴ ██████████ continued that Bardio disclosed that she worked at Star Hyundai from August 3rd until February 8th, from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., and as such, her work hours at the car dealership conflicted with her DOE workday hours. Bardio worked remotely for the DOE from September 2020 until June 2021, and was responsible for making “outreach attendance calls.”

██████████ and ██████████ subsequently forwarded the assigned SCI investigator Bardio’s pay detail history from September 2020 through February 2021. A review of this documentation revealed that Bardio received approximately \$5,900.00 from the DOE. Further, ██████████ advised the investigator that Bardio’s remote work hours were 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m., and an email was sent to Bardio and all school aides on April 6, 2020, that clearly noted the change in hours. Specifically, the document stated: Staring Monday, April 6, 2020, all school aide official hours will change to 11:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m.”

A review of documentation received from Star Hyundai revealed that Bardio applied for full-time employment with the car dealership on July 29, 2020. The application further indicated that Bardio was available for immediately employment – any days and hours. Records further revealed that Bardio worked approximately 40 hours per week, Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Bardio was paid by the dealership from August 2020 through February 2021.

In an interview with SCI investigators, Bardio stated that she requested to work remotely from home during the 2020-2021 school year, and that she worked Monday through Friday – with no set work hours. Bardio explained that her assignment was to contact students’ parents regarding their children’s attendance. Bardio insisted that no one ever told her that she was required to work specific hours while working from home for the DOE.⁵

Bardio acknowledged that from August 2020 until February 2021, she worked for Star Hyundai from 8:00 a.m. until 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Bardio told investigators that her duties at the car dealership were to answer phones and she did so remotely – from her home and from the dealership location. Bardio said that she was not aware that she was not permitted to perform another job while working from home for the DOE during “DOE work hours.” Bardio expressed that she did not think her

³ SOLAS is an online system designed to streamline the leave application process for DOE employees.

⁴ In an email to ██████████ Bardio stated the following: “I worked for another company from home during covid, I’m collecting unemployment from them, they let me go.” Bardio further stated, “I’m going to need the hours each week that you pay me so I can adjust my unemployment each week so I am paid what is owed to me.”

⁵ In a subsequent interview, ██████████ disputed Bardio’s contention. ██████████ stated that that all staff members were verbally made aware of their work hours while working remotely from home. ██████████ maintained that no staff member was permitted to work any other hours than their assigned work schedule and all school aides were required to sign in everyday while working from home. Further, as noted previously, staff members were also emailed documentation that stated that the School Aides five-hour workday was from 11:00 a.m. until 4:00 p.m.

actions were wrong because she was capable of completing both jobs at the same time. Bardio explained that she accepted a job with Star Hyundai “to make ends meet,” because her husband had lost his job due to the pandemic and she needed a second job to pay for necessities.

II. Conclusion and Recommendation:

Upon review of the above facts, SCI substantiated that Bridgit Bardio worked for Star Hyundai auto dealership from September 2020 until February 2021 – during which time; she was paid by the DOE to work remotely from home. SCI was able to substantiate this allegation based upon pay detail records, as well as email messages, and statements made by Bardio wherein she admitted, “completing both jobs at the same time.” As such, Bardio received approximately \$5,900.00 in DOE salary payments to which she was not entitled. It is the recommendation of this office that the DOE take whatever disciplinary action it deems appropriate against Bardio, including but not limited to Bardio remitting any and all monies earned from her DOE salary while she was paid by Star Hyundai.

We also note that the conduct of Bridgit Bardio may have violated the conflicts of interest provisions of the New York City Charter, which is administered by the New York City Conflicts of Interest Board.

Please respond in writing within 30 days of receipt of this letter as to what, if any, action has been taken or is contemplated regarding Bridgit Bardio, or the recommendation made herein. We are forwarding a copy of this letter to the Office of Legal Services.

Should you have any inquiries regarding the above, please contact Special Counsel Valerie A. Batista, the attorney assigned to the case. She can be reached at (212) 510-1417 or vbattista@nycsci.org. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

ANASTASIA COLEMAN
Special Commissioner of Investigation
for the New York City School District

By: /s/ Daniel I. Schlachet
Daniel I. Schlachet
First Deputy Commissioner

AC:DS:VB:lr

cc: Elizabeth Vladeck, Esq.
Karen Antoine, Esq.
Katherine Rodi, Esq.
Monica Davis-Thorne - Director