BEFORE THE WASHINGTON STATE
EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD

In the Matter of: Austin Kandior Respondent.	No. 2025-063 STIPULATED FACTS, CONCLUSIONS OF LAW AND AGREED ORDER

THIS STIPULATION is entered into by Respondent, Austin Kandior and Board Staff of the WASHINGTON STATE EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD (Board) through KATE REYNOLDS, Executive Director, pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, chapter 34.05 RCW, and WAC 292-100-090(1). The following stipulated facts, conclusions of law, and agreed order will be binding upon the parties if fully executed, and if accepted by the Board without modification(s), and will not be binding if rejected by the Board, or if the Respondent does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, to the stipulation. This stipulation is based on the following:

A. STIPULATED FACTS

1. On August 3, 2025, the Executive Ethics Board (Board) received a complaint alleging that Austin Kandior, an employee of the Washington State Department of Children, Youth and Families (DCYF), may have violated the Ethics in Public Service Act. The complaint alleged that Austin Kandior violated RCW Chapter 42.52, by using state resources for non-work related activities, by providing special privileges, and by conducting activities incompatible with public duties.

2. According to the complaint, Austin Kandior allegedly allowed their subordinate, Tiffany Sewell, to live at their place of residence in Maple Valley, Washington. It was further

alleged that Austin Kandior had "participated in a relationship" with Tiffany Sewell. The complainant further alleged that Austin Kandior had asked them to help move some of Tiffany Sewell's personal belongings out of the above residence and the complainant felt compelled to help so that they were not treated unfairly in the workplace.

3. According to DCYF, Austin Kandior was hired on July 1, 2019, as a Juvenile Rehabilitation Counselor. On April 1, 2020, Austin Kandior became a non-permanent Juvenile Rehabilitation Supervisor. On July 16, 2023, Austin Kandior became a Juvenile Rehabilitation Living Unit Manager and remains in that position.

4. As part of this investigation, Board staff contacted DCYF Human Resources (HR) to inquire if an internal investigation has ever been conducted. According to Christine Dominquez, DCYF HR Operations Manager, while a formal investigation had not occurred, DCYF did conduct a fact finding into the allegations.

5. DCYF learned the residence in question had belonged to Austin Kandior's father and all rental proceeds from Tiffany Sewell allegedly went into Austin Kandior's father's trust account and not directly to Austin Kandior. DCYF did not learn about this situation until after Tiffany Sewell had moved out of the residence. Austin Kandior then inquired with DCYF if this was allowed, to which DCYF informed Austin Kandior that no, they should not rent property affiliated with them or their direct family to staff in the future.

6. According to DCYF, Austin Kandior did not hire Tiffany Sewell, however, Tiffany Sewell was Austin Kandior's subordinate. Both Austin Kandior and Tiffany Sewell denied ever being in a romantic relationship to DCYF and they also denied living together on the property in question. DCYF further advised that they spoke to the complainant on this matter, but due to

"limited details available to give credence" DCYF opted to not conduct a full investigation into the alleged unfair treatment of the complainant.

7. As part of this investigation, Board staff reached out to Austin Kandior's supervisor, Derek Strey, Echo Glen Associate Superintendent. According to Derek Strey, they were not aware that Tiffany Sewell had been renting a house from Austin Kandior. When asked if they were aware of any personal relationship between Austin Kandior and Tiffany Sewell, Derek Strey advised they were not. Derek Strey further advised that per DCYF policies, if they had been in a romantic relationship, they should have notified Derek Strey, at which point Derek Strey would have moved either Austin Kandior or Tiffany Sewell to a different work location. Derek Strey further advised that it is common, however, for staff members to often hang out with one another outside of work.

8. As part of this investigation, Board staff reached out to Tiffany Sewell for more information. According to Tiffany Sewell, Austin Kandior had notified them of the available rental in "September or October 2022." Tiffany Sewell informed Board staff that they moved into the rental property "right after Thanksgiving" of 2022 and later moved out on May 28, 2025.

9. Tiffany Sewell advised they paid $2,000 per month in rent and made payments to the "Kandior Trust" by money order/or cashier check.[1] Tiffany Sewell denied ever being in a relationship with Austin Kandior, advising they were "friendly with each other" but that they "maintain strict professional boundaries." Regarding Austin Kandior supervising Tiffany Sewell, they stated Austin Kandior was their direct supervisor from August 2022 until December 2025.

[1] Board staff researched "Kandior Trust" but found no registered trust, business, or other related information.

10. As part of this investigation, Board staff checked the above noted address on WestLaw Edge. The address showed as being associated with several different people, including, Austin Kandior, reported April 30, 2020, and Tiffany Sewell, reported February 2, 2023).

11. In Austin Kandior's written response to Board staff, they stated, in part:

> *I would like to state that the property involved in this matter was not previously owned by me, nor did I have control of ownership of the home. In 2022, Ms. Tiffany Sewell stated she was looking for a residence to rent and I facilitated the information to her that this property was vacant. I understand that there was a correlation between myself and the home and do take accountability for this. I further would like to make clear the Associate Superintendent at Echo Glen during this time (Derek Strey and Stephanie Ewing) were aware Ms. Sewell had been renting from this address. I was not informed this could have been a potential ethics violation, so I assumed it was okay for her to reside there.*

12. As part of this investigation, Board staff reached out to Stephanie Ewing to inquire if Austin Kandior's above statement of them "knowing" about Tiffany Sewell renting the residence in question was accurate. According to Stephanie Ewing, they never directly supervised Austin Kandior. Stephanie Ewing further stated they felt they were made aware of the situation after Tiffany Sewell had already vacated the property but they are not completely sure.

13. According to Austin Kandior, they were married and lived in their own residence during this time and their residence they lived in was not part of their father's trust. Austin Kandior also stated that they were not in a relationship with Tiffany Sewell despite what was alleged in the complaint.

B. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, prohibits state employees from engaging in activities incompatible with public duties. RCW 42.52.020 states:

> No state officer or state employee may have an interest, financial or otherwise, direct or indirect, or engage in a business or transaction or professional activity, or incur an obligation

> of any nature, that is in conflict with the proper discharge of the state officer's or state employee's official duties.

2. Based on the evidence reviewed, Austin Kandior's personal interest in renting their father's rental conflicted with their supervisory duties of their subordinate in violation of RCW 42.52.020.

3. The Ethics in Public Service Act, Chapter 42.52 RCW, prohibits state employees from providing special privileges and exemptions. RCW 42.52.070 states:

> No state officer or state employee may use his or her position to secure special privileges or exemptions for himself or herself, or his or her spouse, child, parents, or other persons.

4. Based on the evidence reviewed, Austin Kandior used their position as a supervisor to benefit their father's trust by providing rental information to their subordinate in violation of RCW 42.52.070.

5. The Board is authorized to impose sanctions for violations to the Ethics Act pursuant to RCW 42.52.360. The Board has set forth criteria in WAC 292-120-030 for imposing sanctions and consideration of any mitigating or aggravating factors.

C. AGGRAVATING AND MITIGATING FACTORS

In determining the appropriateness of the civil penalty, the Board reviewed the criteria in WAC 292-120-030. In the matter at hand, it is an aggravating factor these types of violations significantly reduce the public respect and confidence in state government employees. In the matter at hand, there are no mitigating factors.

D. STIPULATION AND AGREED ORDER

1. Pursuant to chapter 42.52 RCW, the Executive Ethics Board has jurisdiction over Austin Kandior and over the subject matter of this complaint.

2. Under RCW 34.05.060, the Board can establish procedures for attempting and executing informal settlement of matters in lieu of more formal proceedings under the Administrative Procedures Act, including adjudicative hearings. The Board has established such procedures under WAC 292-100-090.

3. Pursuant to WAC 292-100-090(1), the parties have the authority to resolve this matter under the terms contained herein, subject to Board approval.

4. Austin Kandior agrees that if any or all of the alleged violations were proven at a hearing, the Board may impose sanctions, including a civil penalty under RCW 42.52.480(1)(b) of up to $5,000, or the greater of three times the economic value of anything received or sought in violation of chapter 42.52 RCW, for each violation found. The Board may also order the payment of costs, including reasonable investigative costs, under RCW 42.52.480(1)(c).

5. Austin Kandior further agrees that the evidence available to the Board is such that the Board may conclude they violated the Ethics in Public Service Act. Therefore, in the interest of seeking an informal and expeditious resolution of this matter, the parties agree to entry of the stipulated findings of fact, conclusions of law and agreed order.

6. Austin Kandior waives the opportunity for a hearing, contingent upon acceptance of this stipulation by the Board, or their acceptance of any modification(s) proposed by the Board, pursuant to the provisions of WAC 292-100-090(2).

7. If the Board accepts this stipulation, the Board agrees to release and discharge from all further ethics proceedings under chapter 42.52 RCW for any allegations arising out of the facts in this matter, subject to payment of the full amount of the civil penalty due and owing, any other costs imposed, and compliance with all other terms and conditions of the stipulation. Austin

Kandior in turn agrees to release and discharge the Board, its officers, agents and employees from all claims, damages, and causes of action arising out of this complaint and this stipulation.

8. If the Board accepts this stipulation, it does not purport to settle any other claims between Austin Kandior and the Washington State Executive Ethics Board, the State of Washington, or other third party, which may be filed in the future. No other claims of alleged violations are pending against Austin Kandior at this time.

9. If the Board accepts this stipulation, it is enforceable under RCW 34.05.578 and any other applicable statutes or rules.

10. If the Board rejects this stipulation, or if Austin Kandior does not accept the Board's proposed modification(s), if any, this matter will be scheduled for an administrative hearing before the Board. If an administrative hearing is scheduled before the Board, Austin Kandior waives any objection to participation by any Board member at the hearing to whom this stipulation was presented for approval under WAC 292-100-090(2). Further, Austin Kandior understands and agrees that this stipulation as well as information obtained during any settlement discussions between the parties shall not be admitted into evidence during the administrative hearing, unless otherwise agreed by the parties.

11. Austin Kandior agrees to pay a civil penalty in the amount of one-thousand dollars ($1,000) associated with violations of RCW 42.52. The Board agrees to suspend two-hundred-fifty dollars ($250) on the condition that Austin Kandior complies with all terms and conditions of this Stipulation and Order and commits no further violations of RCW 42.52 for a period of two years from the date this agreement is executed.

12. The civil penalty in the amount of seven-hundred-fifty dollars ($750) is payable in full to the Washington State Executive Ethics Board within forty-five (45) days after this stipulation is signed and accepted by the Board, or as otherwise agreed to by the parties.

I. CERTIFICATION

I, Austin Kandior, hereby certify that I have read this stipulation in its entirety, that my counsel of record, if any, has fully explained the legal significance and consequence of it. I further certify that I fully understand and agree to all of it, and that it may be presented to the Board without my appearance. I knowingly and voluntarily waive my right to a hearing in this matter and if the Board accepts the stipulation, I understand that I will receive a signed copy.

Austin Kandior 9/8/26

Austin Kandior Date
Respondent

Presented by:

K. Reynolds 9/11/2026

KATE REYNOLDS Date
Executive Director

II. ORDER

Having reviewed the proposed stipulation, WE, THE STATE OF WASHINGTON EXECUTIVE ETHICS BOARD, pursuant to WAC 292-100-090, HEREBY ORDER that the Stipulation is

__✓__ ACCEPTED in its entirety;

_____ REJECTED in its entirety;

_____ MODIFIED. This stipulation will become the order of the Board if the Respondent approves* the following modification(s):

_____

_____

DATED this 11th day of September 2026

Megan Abel

Megan Abel, Chair

Cam Comfort, Vice Chair

Kelli Hooke, Member

David Hankins, Member

Mark Rapozo, Member

* I, Austin Kandior, accept/do not accept (circle one) the proposed modification(s).

_____

Austin Kandior, Respondent Date