

**PUBLICATION OF REDACTED VERSION**  
**OF THE OEIG FOR THE AGENCIES UNDER THE GOVERNOR**  
**INVESTIGATIVE REPORT**

Case Number: 23-00064

Subject(s): Aja Knight

Below is the redacted version of an investigative summary report issued by the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor. Pursuant to section 20-50 of the State Officials and Employees Ethics Act (Act) (5 ILCS 430/20-50), a summary report of an investigation is required to be issued by an executive inspector general when, and only when, at the conclusion of investigation, the executive inspector general determines reasonable cause exists to believe a violation has occurred. If a complaint is not to be filed with the Executive Ethics Commission (Commission) for adjudication of the alleged violation, the Act further requires the executive inspector general to deliver to the Commission a statement setting forth the basis for the decision not to file a complaint and a copy of the summary report of the investigation and of the response from the ultimate jurisdictional authority or agency head regarding the summary report. 5 ILCS 430/20-50(c-5). The Act requires that some summary reports be made available to the public and authorizes the Commission to make others available. 5 ILCS 430/20-52. Before making them available, however, the Commission is to redact from them information that may reveal the identity of witnesses, complainants, or informants and may redact “any other information it believes should not be made public.” 5 ILCS 430/20-52(b).

Some summary reports delivered to the Commission may contain a mix of information relating to allegations with respect to which the executive inspector general did and did not determine reasonable cause existed to believe a violation occurred. In those situations, the Commission may redact information relating to those allegations with respect to which the existence of reasonable cause was not determined.

The Commission exercises its publication responsibility with great caution and seeks to balance the sometimes-competing interests of transparency and fairness to the accused and others uninvolved. To balance these interests, the Commission has redacted certain information contained in this report and identified where said redactions have taken place and inserted clarifying edits as marked. Publication of a summary report of an investigation, whether redacted or not, is made

with the understanding that the subject or subjects of the investigation may not have had the opportunity to rebut the report's factual allegations or legal conclusions before issuance of the report. Moreover, there has not been, nor will there be, an opportunity for the subject to contest or adjudicate them before the Commission. The subject merely has the opportunity to submit a response for publication with the report.

The Commission received this report and a response from the ultimate jurisdictional authority and/or agency in this matter from the Agencies of the Illinois Governor Office of Executive Inspector General ("OEIG"). The Commission, pursuant to 5 ILCS 430/20-52, redacted the OEIG's final report and responses and mailed copies of the redacted version and responses to the Attorney General, the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor, and each subject.

The Commission reviewed all suggestions received and makes this document available pursuant to 5 ILCS 430/20-52. By publishing the below redacted summary report, the Commission neither makes nor adopts any determination of fact or conclusions of law for or against any individual or entity referenced therein.

– THE REDACTED VERSION OF THE EIG'S SUMMARY REPORT  
BEGINS ON THE NEXT PAGE –

## **I. INTRODUCTION**

Based on finding evidence of a State employee fraudulently obtaining a federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) loan, the OEIG conducted a larger review to determine whether State employees properly obtained PPP loans and provided notice of secondary employment. Based on the large volume of PPP loans obtained by State employees, the OEIG narrowed its review based on certain factors including those State employees who received approximately \$20,000 or more in PPP loan funds.<sup>1</sup>

The OEIG self-initiated this investigation regarding a \$20,832 PPP loan obtained by Aja Knight while employed at the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS). During her interview with the OEIG, Ms. Knight admitted that she may have obtained and spent the PPP proceeds.

## **II. BACKGROUND**

Ms. Knight began working for the State in June 2020, and has been a Mental Health Technician 1 since January 2021.

The PPP was created by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and administered by the Small Business Administration (SBA) to provide relief to small businesses affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. PPP loans were made to eligible businesses, which included sole proprietorships and self-employed individuals, for qualifying payroll costs and business operating expenses such as insurance, rent, and utilities.<sup>2</sup> To apply for the loan, a sole proprietor or self-employed individual needed to submit certain tax filings or other payroll documentation to an SBA-approved lender, establishing their eligibility and demonstrating the qualifying payroll amount, which as of March 2021 could be based on “gross income” reported on an IRS Form 1040, Schedule C.<sup>3</sup> PPP loans were eligible for forgiveness by the SBA if used on qualifying expenses and if at least 60% was used for payroll costs.<sup>4</sup>

## **III. INVESTIGATION**

### **A. PPP Records For Aja Knight**

The OEIG located public records from the SBA showing that Ms. Knight received a \$20,832 PPP loan in April 2021 for a sole proprietorship. The OEIG subpoenaed loan documents from the lender, which included a PPP “Borrower Application Form for Schedule C Filers Using Gross Income Revised March 18, 2021” signed in Ms. Knight’s name and dated March 30, 2021. The “Sole proprietor” box was checked on the application, the Business Legal Name was Aja

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<sup>1</sup> From the OEIG’s review, in order to be eligible for at least \$20,000 in loan proceeds, the small business typically had approximately \$100,000 or more in yearly net profit or gross income. The OEIG will be referring to the Ultimate Jurisdictional Authority those State employees who obtained PPP loans in smaller amounts or were not investigated for other logistical reasons.

<sup>2</sup> 15 U.S.C. § 636(a)(36); SBA Interim Final Rule, 85 FR 20811 (Apr. 15, 2020).

<sup>3</sup> SBA Interim Final Rule, 86 FR 13149 (Mar. 8, 2021) (expanded definition of “payroll costs” for sole proprietors).

<sup>4</sup> *See id.*; 15 U.S.C. § 636(m).

Knight, the Tradename was listed as “Knight of knights,” the year of establishment was listed as 2018, and the business was categorized under a code for “Beauty Salons.” Ms. Knight was identified as the sole employee. The loan application contained various certifications, all reflecting the initials “AK,” which included a statement that the applicant “was in operation on February 15, 2020...and was either an eligible self-employed individual, independent contractor, or sole proprietorship with no employees...”; a statement that the funds would be used as authorized by PPP rules; and a statement that information provided in the application and supporting documentation was “true and accurate in all material respects.”

The loan application listed the gross income amount from tax year 2020 IRS Form 1040, Schedule C, line 7 as \$108,000. That figure was used to calculate the loan amount of \$20,832 (intended to cover a period up to 2.5 months). A 2020 Schedule C Profit or Loss From Business form for beautician services in Ms. Knight’s name, which listed gross income of \$108,000, was submitted with the loan application.

Other documents were submitted related to the loans, which included:

- a bank statement in Ms. Knight’s name for an account ending in [redacted]; and
- a photo of Ms. Knight’s Illinois driver’s license.

The loan documentation included a “Note” dated April 5, 2021, for a loan in the amount of \$20,832, with a signature in Ms. Knight’s name and an Additional and Correction Documents Agreement contained a document signed in Ms. Knight’s name stating that the proceeds of the PPP loan would be used only for business related purposes as authorized by the PPP and as specified in the loan application. A PPP loan forgiveness application was dated August 30, 2021, and contained a signature in Ms. Knight’s name, indicating the amount spent on payroll costs was \$15,000 and requesting forgiveness of the full amount of \$20,832 loan. The application included certifications that the borrower had complied with all requirements, including those related to eligible use of PPP loan proceeds, and that the information provided in the application was “true and correct in all material respects.” An SBA document, included with the lender documents, stated that the loan had been forgiven in full on September 3, 2021.

## **B. Secondary Employment Information**

The OEIG also reviewed the DHS personnel file for Ms. Knight, for any documents related to her secondary employment. At the time the OEIG reviewed Ms. Knight’s personnel file, there were two Report of Secondary Employment forms submitted in 2020. Neither of the forms documented that she had reported any secondary employment.

## **C. Aja Knight’s OEIG Interview**

On February 9, 2023, the OEIG interviewed Aja Knight. At that time, Ms. Knight said that she had been on paid administrative leave from DHS since approximately September or October 2021. Ms. Knight said that since working at DHS, she has had additional employment. Specifically, Ms. Knight said from May to August 2022, she was employed cleaning the pool at her apartment complex. Ms. Knight stated that in October 2022, she was employed at a gas station,

but she resigned before she completed the training because shifts would have conflicted with the time she was on call for her position at DHS. Additionally, Ms. Knight stated that beginning in 2018 or 2019, she started working for Instacart and DoorDash, but did not do it consistently. Ms. Knight stated that she recently started working for Instacart more consistently and had worked as recently as the day before her OEIG interview. Ms. Knight said that she also considered starting her own clothing business called [Company 1], but the only work she had done towards establishing her business was registering it as a Limited Liability Corporation (LLC) with the Illinois Office of the Secretary of State (SOS) in 2019 or 2020. Ms. Knight stated that she never did any work through the business and had not received any income from it.

Ms. Knight said that she did not disclose any of her additional jobs as secondary employment to DHS. Ms. Knight said that she recalled learning about secondary employment during her onboarding training but had forgotten the details about it. Ms. Knight stated that she knew that if someone has a business, they had to report it, but she did not report her own business to DHS because she had only filed for an LLC and did not do any work for it. After reading DHS' secondary employment policy during the interview, Ms. Knight said that her understanding of the policy was that DHS employees could not have another job that interfered with their DHS work hours. Ms. Knight stated that she did not know she had to actually report any secondary employment. Ms. Knight stated that she has not been asked since her onboarding to report her secondary employment and did not fill out any secondary employment forms in 2021 or 2022. Ms. Knight confirmed that she did not disclose having secondary employment on the Report of Secondary Employment form she signed and submitted in 2020.

Ms. Knight denied applying for any kind of funding or loan for her business. Ms. Knight said she had heard of PPP loans, but she knew that she did not qualify because her business was not operational. When shown the loan application in the interview, Ms. Knight confirmed that her name, mailing address, and Social Security Number (SSN) were accurately listed on the application, but claimed that she had never seen the application before and did not sign or initial the document. Ms. Knight denied filling out the loan application or providing any of the information on the document and denied giving anyone permission to fill out the application on her behalf. Ms. Knight claimed that the telephone number and email address listed on the application were not hers and she did not know who they belonged to. Ms. Knight said that she did not establish a business in 2018, and had never done any work related to beauty salons. Ms. Knight claimed she had never heard of the business name "Knight of knights" that was listed on the application. Ms. Knight stated that the \$108,000 in gross income listed on the application was not accurate as she has never made that much money in one year and did not make that much in tax year 2020.

Ms. Knight acknowledged that her name, home address, and SSN were accurately listed on the Schedule C Form 1040 Profit or Loss for Business form submitted with the loan application, but denied filling it out or giving anyone else permission to fill it out on her behalf. Ms. Knight also confirmed that the driver's license and bank statement associated with her account ending in [redacted] submitted with the application were hers, but denied submitting either with the loan application or giving anyone a copy. Ms. Knight claimed that the driver's license submitted with the application was her old license that expired in 2022, and said that she lost her driver's license and identification card at some point and had to get new ones. Ms. Knight stated that she has also

lost her SSN card approximately three or four times, and just recently got a new replacement card issued to her.

Ms. Knight said she did not know whether the loan proceeds of \$20,832 were deposited into her bank account. Ms. Knight said that she recalled receiving a large sum of money in her account ending in [redacted], but said she was not sure if it was the PPP loan funds. Ms. Knight explained that in 2020, she got into a car accident, and subsequently received a settlement payment in 2021 of approximately \$10,000 to \$15,000. Ms. Knight stated that she did not recall exactly when in 2021 she received the settlement payment, but said that once it was deposited into her bank account, she stopped keeping track of how much money she had in her account because she knew she had enough to spend without having to check. Ms. Knight stated that no one else has access to her banking information or her phone and she does not have any authorized users on her bank accounts. However, Ms. Knight claimed that she had received fraud alerts in the past informing her that her accounts could have been hacked. Ms. Knight stated that she had problems with the bank account submitted with the loan application, such as fees being charged, money being taken out, and her balance being in the negative. Ms. Knight confirmed that the account ending in [redacted] was her primary banking account in March 2021 and the account is still open, but she does not currently use it.<sup>5</sup>

Ms. Knight ultimately said that it is possible that the \$20,832 in loan proceeds was deposited into her account ending in [redacted], but that she did not know for certain because she was not keeping track of her bank account. Ms. Knight reiterated that she had received the accident settlement money and was not concerned with checking her account balance because she knew she had money to spend. Ms. Knight stated that at one point she had about \$19,000 in her bank account but did not recall seeing a lump sum of \$20,832 being deposited into her account. Ms. Knight stated that she would be surprised to learn that she got a \$20,832 loan and speculated that a scammer may have tried to get the loan in her name and put it into her bank account so that they could try to take it out.

Ms. Knight claimed that she had never seen the Note, and that, although her name appeared to have been signed on the document, she did not sign it herself. Ms. Knight also claimed to have never seen the PPP Loan Forgiveness Application, and, although her name, mailing address, and last four digits of her SSN were accurately listed, and her initials and a signature of her name were on the forgiveness application, she did not initial or sign the document or fill it out herself. Ms. Knight acknowledged that the phone number listed on the Forgiveness Application was the same one listed on the PPP application, and reiterated that it was not hers and she did not know who the number belonged to. However, Ms. Knight stated that the email address on the form, which was different than the one on the application, did in fact belong to her. Ms. Knight stated that it was an old email address and she did not know if she still had access to that email in August 2021. Ms. Knight stated that she was not sure if anyone else had access to the account, and that she did not recall receiving any emails about the PPP loan or forgiveness application on that account. Ms. Knight said that she had heard about others getting their PPP loans forgiven, but that she had no idea why someone would fill out the forgiveness application in her name. Ms. Knight also said

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<sup>5</sup> She also confirmed that this was the account that her DHS paychecks had been deposited into until the spring or summer of 2022, when she changed the direct deposits to a different account.

that she had never seen the SBA Notice of PPP Forgiveness Payment dated September 3, 2021, but acknowledged the form indicated the \$20,832 loan in her name had been forgiven.

Ms. Knight stated that she did not know how she got the loan money. Ms. Knight clarified that she did not deny receiving the loan money, but said that she probably spent it without knowing what was going on or where it came from. Ms. Knight acknowledged that regardless of who completed the application and Schedule C, the business income and expenses numbers were inaccurate because she never had an operating business. Ms. Knight reiterated her claim that she did not fill out the application herself. Ms. Knight stated that if she had completed the application herself, she would not have lied about the numbers because she would not have wanted to put herself in a compromising situation.

At the end of her OEIG interview, Ms. Knight said she recalled that a relative had told her about a business grant sometime in 2020, and filled out a grant application on Ms. Knight's behalf for her [Company 1] business, but the grant application was denied. Ms. Knight stated that she believes she provided her relative with her SSN, but did not give her a copy of her driver's license or bank statement. Ms. Knight stated that she thought the grant was for about \$5,000-\$10,000. Ms. Knight stated that it was never presented to her as being a loan or related to the PPP program.

#### **D. Aja Knight's Settlement Payment and Bank Account Records**

After the interview, the OEIG requested that Ms. Knight produce any and all documents and information related to the payment of a settlement to her resulting from a car accident, including any settlement agreement, bank statements, or other proof. In response, Ms. Knight sent a screenshot of a bank statement for her account ending in [redacted] that showed a deposit on February 3, 2021, of \$10,283.34 titled "Counter Credit."<sup>6</sup> Ms. Knight produced no other documentation indicating the \$10,000 deposit was proceeds related to a car accident settlement.

The OEIG subpoenaed records from the bank for any account records associated with Ms. Knight's bank account ending [redacted], and any other account held in Ms. Knight's name. In response, the bank produced, in part, statements for three separate accounts (a checking account ending [redacted], savings account ending [redacted], and savings account ending [redacted]) with no other signatory on the accounts besides Ms. Knight. A statement from Ms. Knight's checking account ending in [redacted] reflected a deposit was made on February 3, 2021 of \$10,283.34 titled "Counter Credit" and showed that the ending balance of the account on February 23, 2021 was \$9,429.21. By the following month, on March 26, 2021, the account balance was down to \$391.07. Bank statements show that between March 27 and April 14, 2021, \$5,537.73 was deposited into the account, and \$4,070.49 was withdrawn or subtracted, leaving an approximate balance of \$1,858.31 on April 14, 2021.<sup>7</sup>

The statements produced by the bank also showed a deposit into Ms. Knight's checking account ending in [redacted] on April 15, 2021, of \$20,832 titled, in part, "PPP funding" and "SBA funding." The statements also showed that an online banking transfer was made on the same day,

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<sup>6</sup> "Counter Credit" signifies a cash deposit was made with a bank teller.

<sup>7</sup> During her OEIG interview, Ms. Knight said that her State paychecks were directly deposited into her checking account ending in [redacted] until the summer of 2022.

transferring \$19,000 from the checking account ending in [redacted] to Ms. Knight's savings account ending in [redacted].

Following the April 15, 2021 \$19,000 transfer between accounts, bank statements from both Ms. Knight's checking account ending in [redacted] and savings account ending in [redacted] show repeated transfers of money from Ms. Knight's savings account back to her checking account. For example, in the eleven days following the April 15, 2021 transfer, Ms. Knight made the four following "online banking transfer[s]" back into her checking account:

- \$2,000 on April 19, 2021, through two separate \$1,000 transactions,
- \$2,000 on April 20, 2021, and
- \$2,600 on April 26, 2021.

The bank statement for Ms. Knight's checking account also shows that following each large transfer of funds back into her checking account, the frequency and cost of charges to Ms. Knight's checking account were significantly higher than other days. For example, from April 1 to April 14, 2021, there were an average of three charges to Ms. Knight's checking account each day with an average daily spending of \$227. However, on April 19 and 20, 2021, Ms. Knight made 24 transactions totaling \$3,619.62. Similarly, on April 26 and 27, 2021, Ms. Knight made 28 transactions totaling \$3,269.11. The bank statements for Ms. Knight's checking account covering May 2021 show similar behavior with five transfers made from her savings to checking account of amounts from \$300 to \$1,500 at a time and a large increase in the frequency and cost of charges to Ms. Knight's checking account in the days immediately following each transfer.

#### **IV. ANALYSIS**

The DHS Rules of Employee Conduct state that an employee's "conduct while off-duty may subject the Employee to discipline up to and including discharge" when the conduct raises "reasonable doubt concerning the Employee's suitability for continued state employment."<sup>8</sup> In addition, the State of Illinois Code of Personal Conduct provides that "A State Employee will conduct himself or herself...with integrity and in a manner that reflects favorably upon the State."<sup>9</sup>

Based on the records obtained in this case, a PPP loan application was submitted in the Ms. Knight's name with personal information including her SSN, bank account number, a copy of her driver's license and bank statement. The business in the loan application, she admitted was not a business she owned, and she stated did not have any business that would be eligible. The \$20,832 in loan proceeds were deposited into Ms. Knight's checking account, immediately transferred to her savings account, and then smaller amounts of those proceeds were intermittently transferred back to her checking account and then spent. A loan forgiveness application was also submitted in Ms. Knight's name and the \$20,832 loan was forgiven.

In her interview, Ms. Knight denied filling out the PPP loan application, denied giving anyone permission to fill out the application on her behalf, and denied knowing she spent the loan proceeds. Ms. Knight's denials, however, are not believable.

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<sup>8</sup> DHS Administrative Directive 01.02.03.040.

<sup>9</sup> Illinois Code of Personal Conduct, Conduct Unbecoming of a State Employee (2017 & March 17, 2021).



Although Ms. Knight acknowledged in her interview that her personal information was correct, she could not explain how someone would have obtained all of the personal information listed in the application. First, Ms. Knight claimed that she had lost her driver's license and social security card and speculated that a scammer had submitted the loan application on her behalf with the hopes they would be able to then take the money from her bank account. Later, Ms. Knight claimed that she provided a relative with her SSN, and implied that her relative may have submitted the PPP loan application on her behalf without her knowledge. This does not explain, however, how someone would have obtained all of the personal information provided to the lender, along with a copy of her bank account statement. Ms. Knight's bank records show that the accounts were solely in her name—with no other authorized users—and she admitted that no one else had access to the account. Nor does her suggestion of a “scammer” explain why someone trying to scam her would then file a loan forgiveness application in her name. Furthermore, Ms. Knight's suggestion that someone else used her identity without her knowledge to apply for the loan, is not consistent with her actions or reactions. Ms. Knight offered no evidence to suggest she took any steps to inquire about someone having her SSN or bank account information—the same bank account into which her State paycheck is directly deposited. Ms. Knight did not say she questioned or reported the \$20,8332 in PPP loan proceeds deposited into her account, nor do the bank records reflect such action. When confronted in the interview with evidence that a PPP loan application had been submitted in her name using her personal information, Ms. Knight also did not express any concern that someone misused her identity, including her SSN, and applied to a loan without her knowledge; nor did she indicate that she had—or planned to—contact law enforcement regarding the purportedly unauthorized access and use of that information.

Contrary to a reasonable reaction to identity theft, Ms. Knight claimed that she may have unknowingly used the PPP loan proceeds in her bank account because she received a large settlement from a car accident she was involved in, and may have spent the PPP loan proceeds believing that it was actually money from her settlement because she stopped keeping track of her account balance.<sup>10</sup> This statement, however, is not reasonably believable for several reasons. First, the records do not support this. Bank records show that there was only one other large deposit in the time frame—February 3, 2021—and that \$10,000 deposit was made in person with a bank teller, not electronically deposited like the PPP proceeds. The bank records show that Ms. Knight had spent almost the entirety of the \$10,000 deposit, and the remaining balance of her account, by March 26, 2021. Ms. Knight did not receive the PPP loan proceeds until April 15, 2021, more than two months after receiving the purported settlement amount. Because of the time that elapsed between the two large deposits, and the expenditure of the first deposited funds, it seems unlikely that Ms. Knight confused the two payments. Second, Ms. Knight's bank statements show that \$20,832 was deposited into her bank account on April 15, 2021, and was titled, in part, “PPP funding” and “SBA funding,” giving an explicit indication of the source of those funds. During her interview, Ms. Knight said she was familiar with PPP loans and even had enough understanding of the program to say she knew she was ineligible to receive a loan. Third, the timing and amount of movement of the deposited money indicate her awareness of the deposit. The day prior to the PPP deposit, Ms. Knight's checking account had an approximate balance of only \$1,858. Nonetheless, on the very same day that the \$20,832 loan proceeds were electronically

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<sup>10</sup> Ms. Knight produced no documentation indicating the \$10,000 deposit was proceeds related to a car accident settlement.

deposited into Ms. Knight's checking account, an online banking transfer moved \$19,000 from her checking account to her savings account. Ms. Knight stated that no one else had access to her banking information and she does not have any authorized users on her bank accounts. After the \$19,000 transfer to her savings account, amounts were then transferred back to the checking account and used. The activity in Ms. Knight's account indicates that Ms. Knight was in fact aware of the balances of her accounts and was tracking and managing those balances, and rapidly spending the PPP funds that had been deposited into her account.

Additionally, the DHS secondary employment policy requires employees to complete a new Report of Secondary Employment form annually, confirming "any secondary employment, including self-employment, or whether no secondary employment exists." It further states that employees who want to engage in previously unreported outside employment need to submit a Report of Secondary Employment form within five working days of commencing secondary employment and receive approval to engage in the secondary employment.<sup>11</sup> Further, due to "unique concerns" related to secondary employment during an official leave of absence, employees on leave are specifically instructed to submit a form when beginning any secondary employment and again within 30 days of returning from leave.<sup>12</sup>

Documents from Ms. King's DHS personnel file show two secondary employment forms for Ms. Knight, dated June 22 and June 25, 2020, on which no secondary employment was reported. No subsequent forms were found, and Ms. Knight admitted she did not disclose any of her additional jobs as secondary employment to DHS or fill out any secondary employment forms in 2021 or 2022, after DHS placed her on administrative leave. Ms. Knight's failure to do so violated DHS Administrative Directives on secondary employment for employees on an official leave of absence.

Therefore, there is reasonable cause to believe Ms. Knight submitted or caused to be submitted a loan application with false information, and received and improperly spent the loan in violation of DHS and State of Illinois policies on employee conduct and secondary employment.

## V. [REDACTED] AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the evidence detailed above, the OEIG has determined **THERE IS REASONABLE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THE FOLLOWING:**

- [REDACTED] – Ms. Knight obtained a federal PPP loan based on falsified information in violation of DHS and State of Illinois policies on employee conduct.
- [REDACTED] – Ms. Knight failed to report secondary employment in violation of DHS policy.

Regardless of the ease of procuring these PPP funds, this was not free money for the taking. These loans, as with any other, required truthful information as a basis for approval. State

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<sup>11</sup> DHS Administrative Directive 01.02.03.120. The policy states that if secondary employment is reported, the form will be placed in the employee's official personnel file. *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*; also see DHS Administrative Directive 01.02.02.230 (Leaves of Absence).

employees are expected, at minimum, to maintain the public's trust and confidence. Misappropriating such funds is far from being ethical, professional, acting with integrity, or conducting oneself in a manner that reflects favorably upon the State. Accordingly, the OEIG recommends that DHS terminate Aja Knight.

No further investigative action is necessary, and this matter is considered closed.

Date: May 3, 2023

Office of Executive Inspector General  
for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor  
69 West Washington Street, Ste. 3400  
Chicago, IL 60602

By: **Kelly Fasbinder**  
Assistant Inspector General

**Francesca Lynn**  
Investigator #102



JB Pritzker, Governor

Illinois Department of Human Services

Grace B. Hou, Secretary

Office of the General Counsel

69 West Washington • 9<sup>th</sup> Floor • Chicago, Illinois 60602

May 4, 2023

***Via e-mail to Senior Paralegal Sherry Bult (at [REDACTED]@illinois.gov), on behalf of:***

Susan M. Haling

Executive Inspector General

Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400

Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE: Response to the Final Reports for Complaints [REDACTED], [REDACTED], 23-00064, [REDACTED], and [REDACTED]

Dear Executive Inspector General Haling:

This letter responds to the Final Reports for the complaints listed above. The Department of Human Services (DHS) is currently reviewing the complaints. Your office will receive an update as these matters move along. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert J. Grindle, DHS' Ethics Officer.

Regards,

/s/ Grace B. Hou by /s/ Robert J. Grindle

Grace B. Hou  
Secretary



JB Pritzker, Governor

Dulce M. Quintero, Secretary Designate

Office of the General Counsel

69 W. Washington St. • Ste. 901 • Chicago, IL 60602

February 29, 2024

***Via e-mail to Senior Paralegal Sherry Bult (at [REDACTED]@illinois.gov) on behalf of:***

Susan M. Haling

Executive Inspector General

Office of the Executive Inspector General for the Agencies of the Illinois Governor

69 West Washington Street, Suite 3400

Chicago, Illinois 60602

RE: Updated Response to the Final Report for Complaint 23-00064

Dear Executive Inspector General Haling:

This letter updates a previous response for the Final Report for Complaint Number 23-00064. That Final Report details two [REDACTED] allegations, regarding the federal Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) and failure to report secondary employment. It makes one recommendation. The recommendation has been followed.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) initiated the disciplinary process. That process is complete, including resolution of all grievances. The individual remains discharged from State employment.

With the employee's separation complete, DHS considers this matter closed. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Robert J. Grindle, DHS' Ethics Officer.

Regards,

/s/ Dulce Quintero by /s/ Robert J. Grindle

Dulce Quintero

Secretary-designate