



State of New Mexico
OFFICE OF THE STATE AUDITOR

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State Auditor Releases Review of Allegations at La Promesa Charter School

Altered document, timeline point to improper reimbursement of public funds for personal expenses

SANTA FE, NM – Today, the Office of the State Auditor (OSA) released a risk review of allegations that a school administrator at La Promesa Charter School in Albuquerque deliberately altered a receipt to receive a reimbursement of public funds for personal expenses. The review found evidence that the receipt in question was altered and that the Executive Director received reimbursement for personal services, in possible violation of state law.

“The timeline of events indicate that the Executive Director used school funds to pay for work completed at her home,” said State Auditor Tim Keller. “Efforts to use funds that belong in our classrooms for personal expenses, in any amount, raises serious concerns of public trust.”

Fact-finding into the allegations revealed:

- The reimbursement in question was for carpet cleaning services that were supposedly performed at the school on July 31, 2015. The review found that on this same day the Executive Director paid to have air ducts cleaned at her personal residence.
- The amount the Executive Director paid for the air duct cleaning services, \$342.40, was the exact same amount submitted for reimbursement from the school for the supposed carpet cleaning.
- The company that issued the receipt that was later altered provided a signed statement that the company never performed any work at the school, only cleaning services at her personal residence.
- The Executive Director purportedly paid for school carpet cleaning with \$342.40 in cash because the school’s business officers were at a conference; however, the referenced conference actually took place the prior month.
- The school’s business office failed to follow its own policy in how it processed the reimbursement.
- The inquiry into the matter by La Promesa’s Governing Council appears to have been limited to information provided by school personnel.

Altering an invoice for personal services and submitting it for reimbursement of public funds raises possible criminal violations including: Government Conduct Act, Public School Finance Act, Paying or Receiving Public Money for Services Not Rendered, and Making or Permitting False Public Voucher.

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The OSA provided the findings of the risk review to the Public Education Department, the La Promesa Governing Council, and referred the matter to the Second Judicial District Attorney's Office for further investigation regarding possible criminal violations. Additionally, the OSA has instructed the independent auditor for La Promesa Charter School to examine other transactions involving the Executive Director.

The risk review is available here:

http://www.saonm.org/media/uploads/La_Promesa_Charter_School.pdf

The Office of the State Auditor helps government work better by providing transparency and accountability for government spending; informing policy choices; and tackling fraud, waste and abuse. OSA is an independently elected executive agency responsible for examining the use of public dollars in New Mexico.

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