



MISSISSIPPI DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

October 25, 2017

State Auditor Stacey Pickering
Mississippi Office of the State Auditor
501 N. West St.
Woolfolk Building, Suite 801
Jackson, MS 39205-0956

Dear Mr. Pickering:

Since the termination of former Bureau Manager, Cerissa Neal, the Mississippi Department of Education (MDE) has engaged in an ongoing review of the various program offices in which Dr. Neal had oversight. Following the release of the PEER Committee's *State Government Purchasing: A Review of Recent Statutory Changes and a Case Study*, I tasked the MDE Office of Internal Audit to dig deeper into the Kyles Company knowing that Dr. Neal authorized the procurement and payment for this vendor. In the midst of their review, on September 27, 2017 your office released the *Limited Internal Control and Compliance Review Management Report* for the MDE for Fiscal Year 2015. The Office of Internal Audit examined the internal control and compliance findings and conducted further review of any materials related to the findings surrounding the Kyles Company.

During this review, the MDE's Internal Audit team reached out to additional MDE staff and searched Dr. Neal's hard drive. In doing so, MDE's Internal Audit team discovered irregularities in procedures related to the Kyles Company and other red flags that caused the MDE to suspect potential fraud, waste, and abuse.

Consistent with the Department of Finance and Administration's MAAPP Manual Section 30.60.10, I am bringing this issue to your immediate attention. My office contacted the OSA on October 23, 2017 to schedule a meeting with you as soon as possible, and was informed that due to your schedule you would not be available to meet with me until the week of November 6, 2017. I am eager to meet with you to discuss this issue in detail and to provide supporting documentation.

Please call MDE Chief of Operations Dr. Felicia Gavin at 601-359-5254 to schedule this meeting at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Carey M. Wright in black ink.

Carey M. Wright, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Education

c: MDE Special Assistant Attorney General

Mississippi State Board of Education Members:

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