

OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL CITY OF BALTIMORE



**Isabel Mercedes Cumming
Inspector General**

Investigative Report Synopsis

OIG Case # 19-0054-I

Issued: June 25, 2019



OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GENERAL
Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
City Hall, Suite 635
100 N. Holliday Street
Baltimore, MD 21202



June 25, 2019

Dear Citizens of Baltimore City,

The Office of the Inspector General (OIG) conducted an investigation regarding two employees in the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) who moved out of the state, and out of the country, but allegedly remained full-time City employees despite working remotely for only a few hours each week.

The mission of the OIG is to promote accountability, efficiency, and integrity in City government, as well as the investigation of complaints of fraud, financial waste, and abuse in City government. The investigation determined both employees, who each made more than \$90,000.00, were allowed to work limited hours a work and maintain full-time status. Both employees were permitted by senior DHCD management to maintain full-time employment with DHCD, including the receipt of employee benefits and the use of their compensatory time.

The investigation determined the employees were conducting DHCD business for only a few hours each week remotely and allowed to use all the leave they had accrued to earn a full paycheck. One employee relocated to Europe in September of 2018 and remained on the City payroll until February of 2019. The other employee relocated to the West Coast in August of 2018 and remained on the City payroll until November of 2018.

One of the employees moved to a country in Europe to pursue academic studies. When the employee informed DHCD management of his intent to leave, he was encouraged to stay with DHCD "in some capacity." The informal agreement between the employee and DHCD allowed the employee to work a few hours each week and use accrued leave and compensatory time to supplement unworked hours. The employee only worked an average of 4.25 hours a week between September 1 and November 1, 2018. He did not work at all from November 2, 2018 through January 2, 2019. Finally, he worked an average of 2 hours a week from January 3 through February 11, 2019. A total of 617 leave hours were used including 272 hours of sick. The employee never reported being sick.

The second employee said she continued working for DHCD, remotely for 5 months, while living on the West Coast in order to train and onboard her replacement. The employee worked an average of 15 hours each week and supplemented her leave with what she had accumulated before she left Maryland. She used a total of 139 hours of leave of which 40 hours were sick time. The employee never reported being sick.

A senior DHCD manager who authorized the employees to work remotely allowed them to use accrued leave, including sick leave, to supplement the hours worked during each pay period. The

REPORT FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE

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manager acknowledged not properly reviewing and approving the timesheets for the two employees. Instead, the Senior Manager provided the agency's timekeeper with their individual login information, so the timekeeper could both enter and approve the timesheets for the two employees, a violation of City policy. The senior manager acknowledged City policy does not allow employees to use sick leave when they are not sick.

The OIG determined a combined loss to the City of \$14,840.88 gross. The employee that went to Europe did reimburse the City the full net amount of \$8,656.29 for the sick time payout.

When spoken with, the DHCD Director advised the OIG that he "was not the architect of [the] idea" to allow the employee to work remotely in Europe. In the attached response, DHCD management wrote the error occurred during a time of transition for the agency and the senior manager's intent was to ensure critical operations in DHCD were not interrupted. DHCD management wrote there was miscommunication in the instructions given to staff that resulted in agency procedures not being followed. Management's response indicated the City was reimbursed for the employees' time that was improperly recorded and provided training to management and staff regarding time and attendance policies and procedures.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Isabel Mercedes Cumming", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Isabel Mercedes Cumming, Inspector General
Office of the Inspector General

Cc: Hon. Bernard C. "Jack" Young, Mayor of Baltimore City
Hon. Brandon Scott, President, City Council
Hon. Joan M. Pratt, Baltimore City Comptroller
Honorable Members of the Baltimore City Council
Hon. Andre M. Davis, City Solicitor