

# Michigan Campaign Finance Complaint

## Section 1. Complainant

**Name:** Matthew Ross Schonert

**Daytime Telephone Number:** +1 (231) 250-9931

**Mailing Address:** 22050 Boulder Avenue, Eastpointe, Michigan 48021

**Email:** mrschonert@gmail.com

## Section 2. Alleged Violator

**Name:** Bessie L. Harris

**Mailing Address:** 5222 Brush Street, Detroit, Michigan 48202

**Email:** aka4everuc@outlook.com

## Section 3. Allegations

### Sections of MCFA alleged to be violated:

**MCL 169.247(1)**

### Explain how those sections were violated:

1. Bessie Harris is a candidate for Detroit Public School Board, according to the Wayne County Clerk's official candidate list for the November 8, 2022, general election.
2. Yard signs expressly promoting this candidate's election contain no identifier whatsoever.
3. In addition, a website expressly advocating this candidate's election contains an invalid or incomplete identifier, due to the omission of the committee's address. URL:  
<https://www.votebessieharris.org>
4. MCL 169.247(1) requires that such materials bear an identifier bearing both a name and address.
5. The omission of the identifier from the yard signs and omission of the address from the website constitute violations of MCL 169.247(1).

**Evidence included with the submission of the complaint that supports the allegations:**

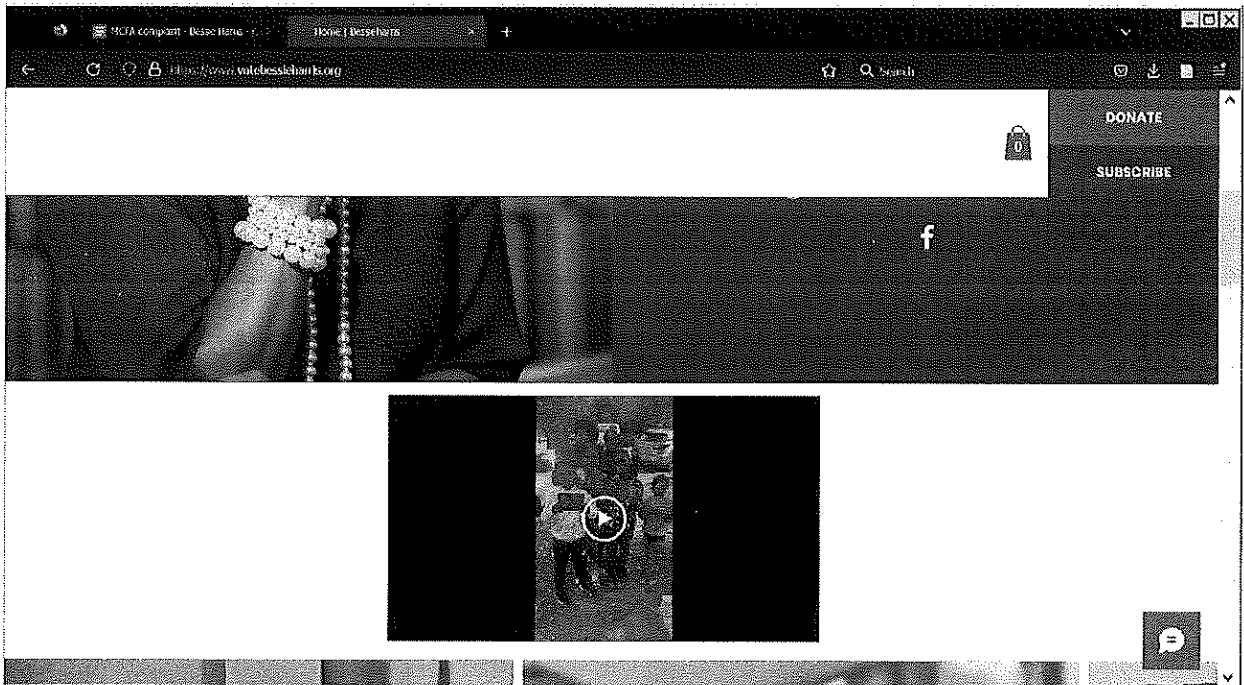
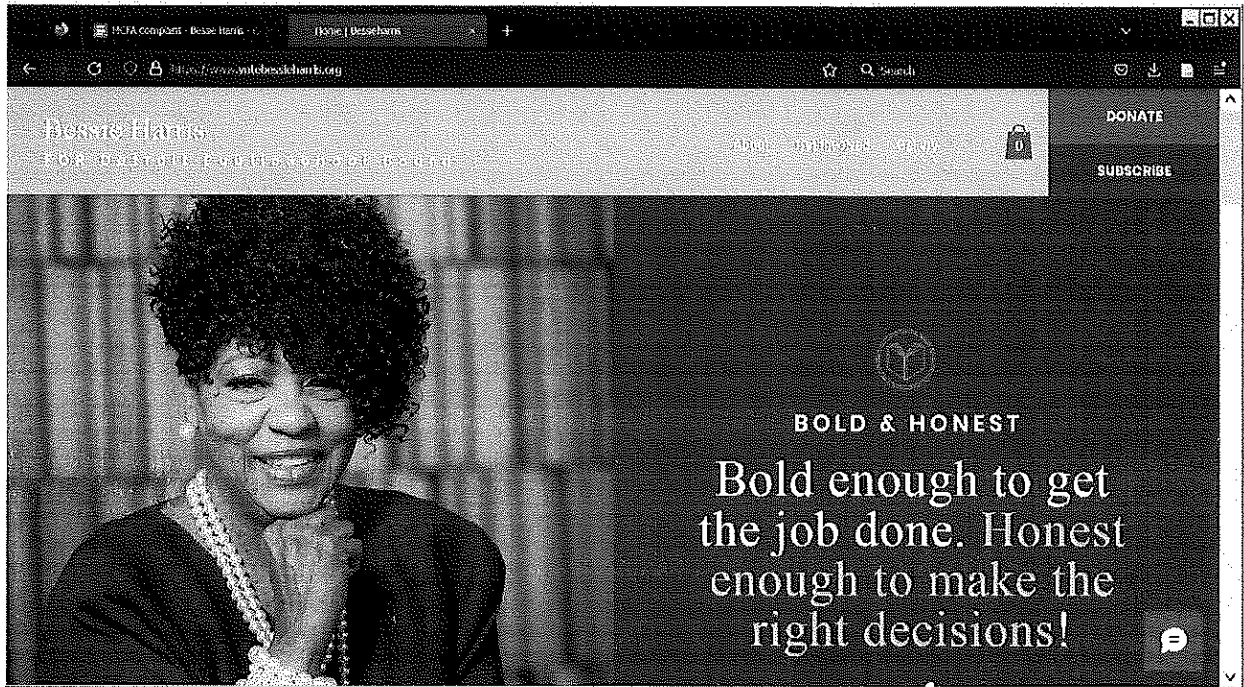
**Yard signs**

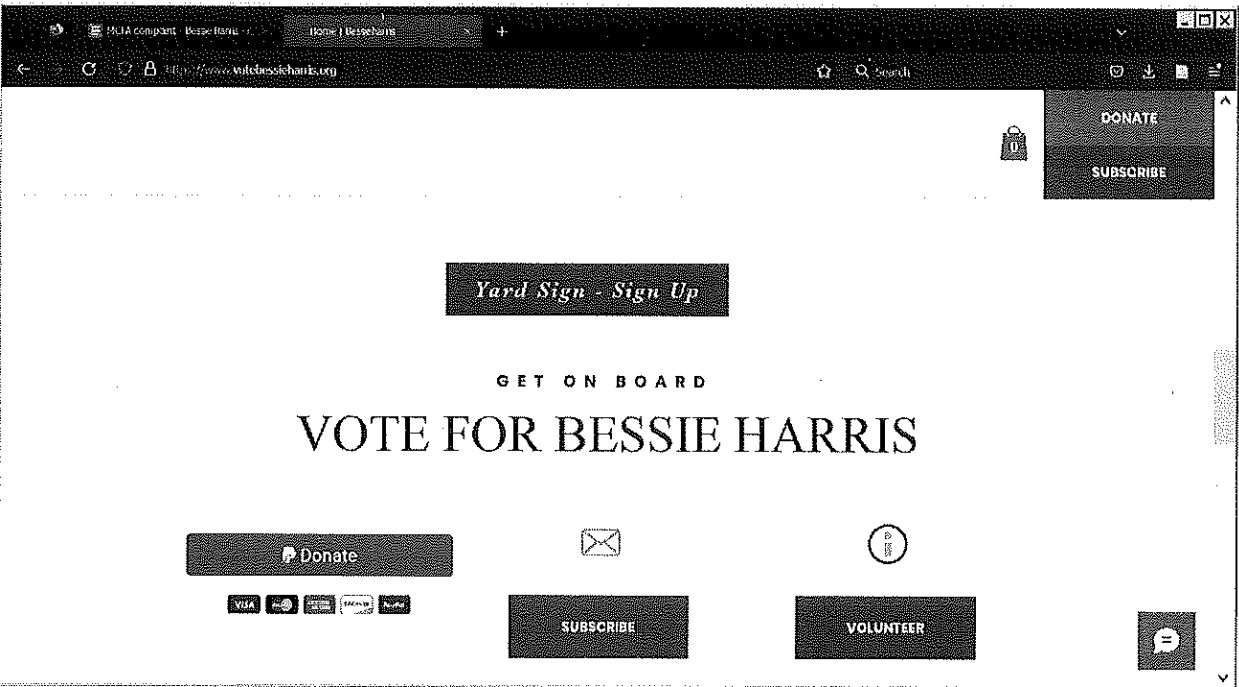
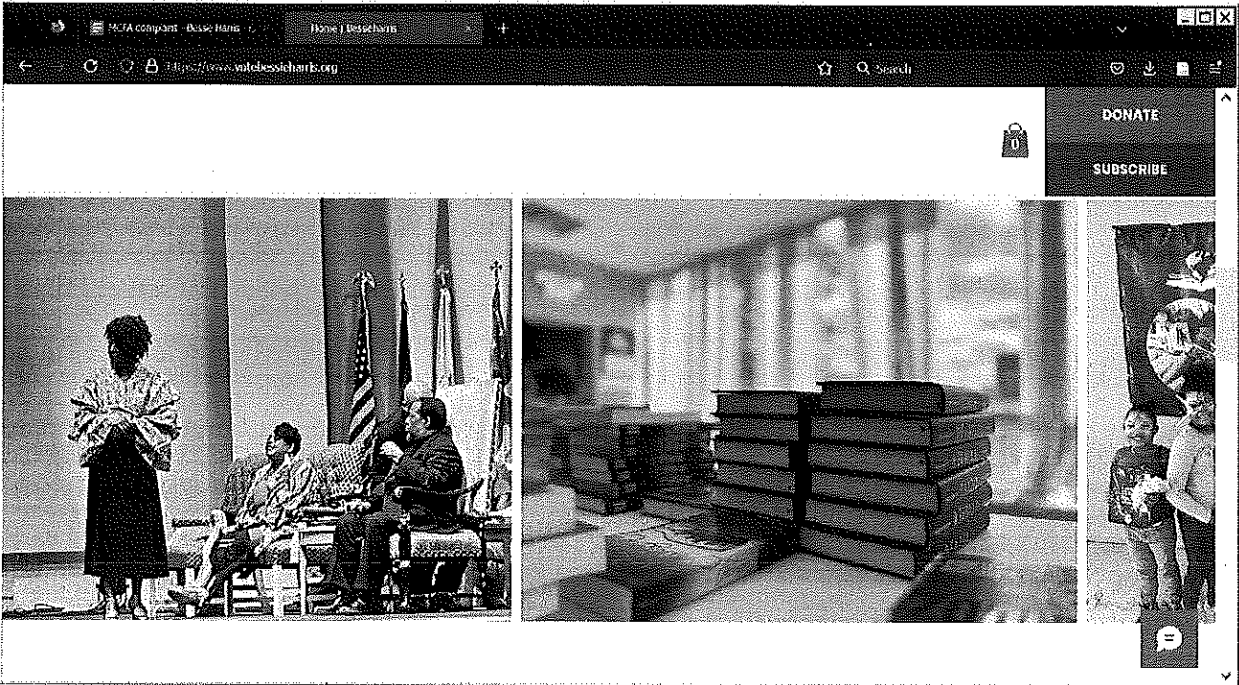
Photos taken October 25, 2022, at E. Warren Avenue and Russell Street in Detroit.

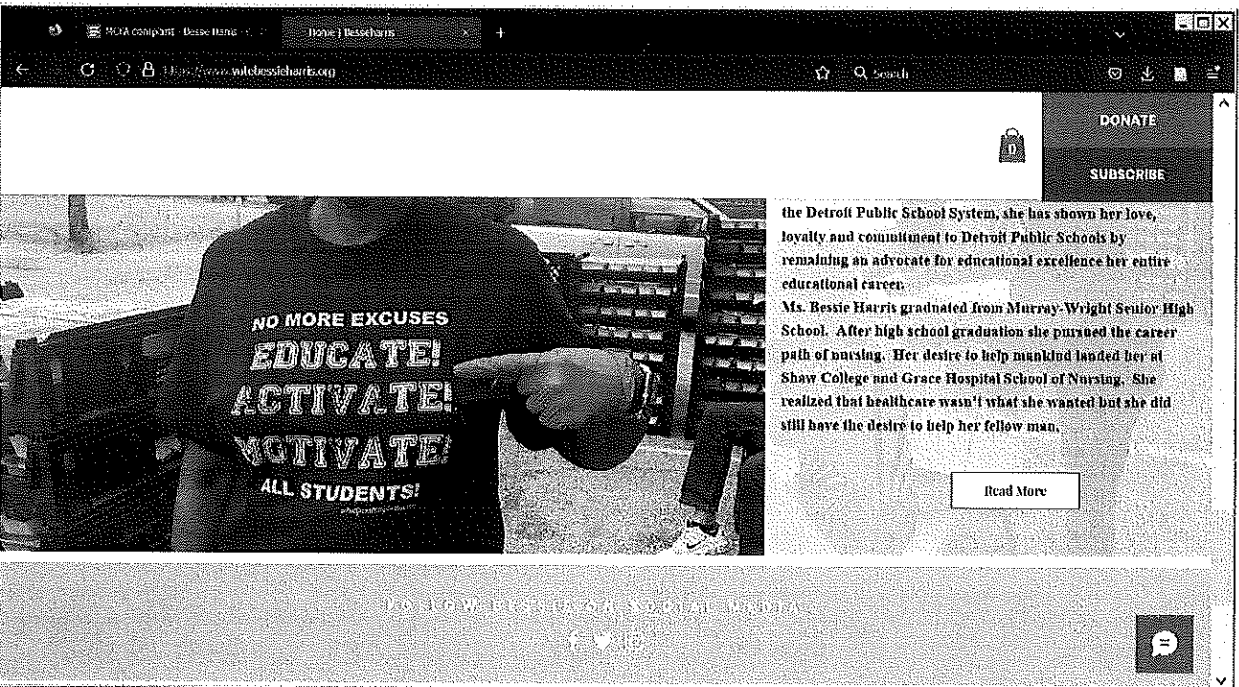
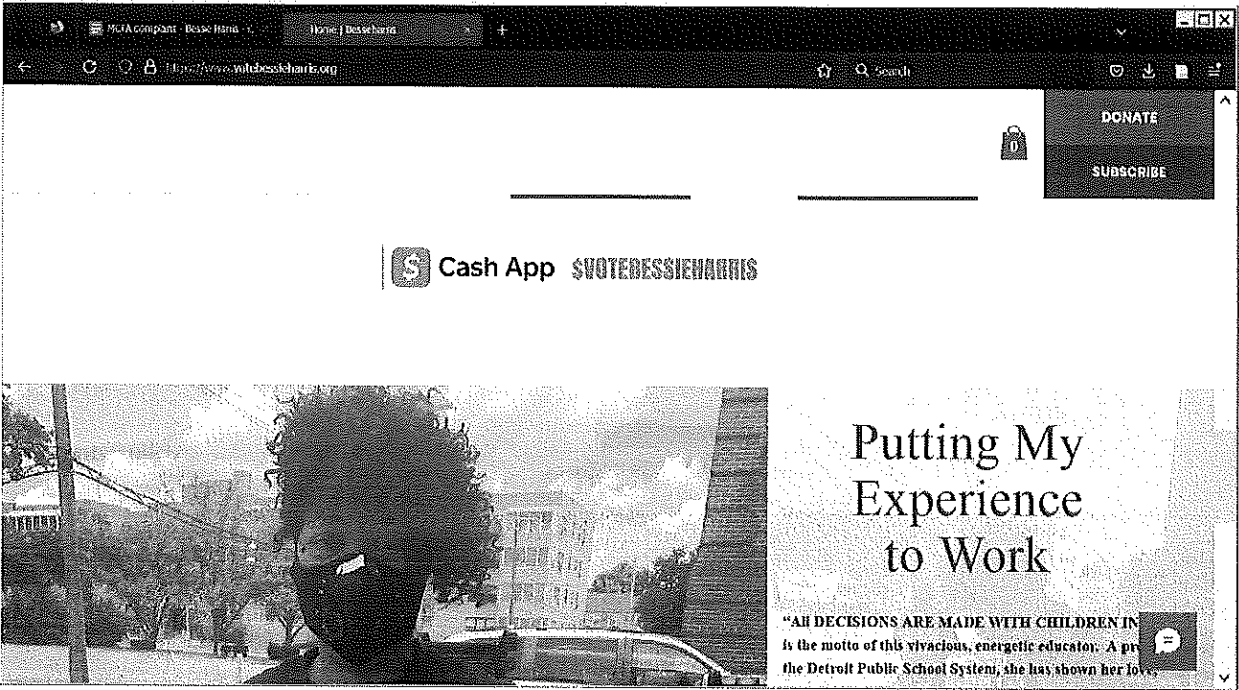


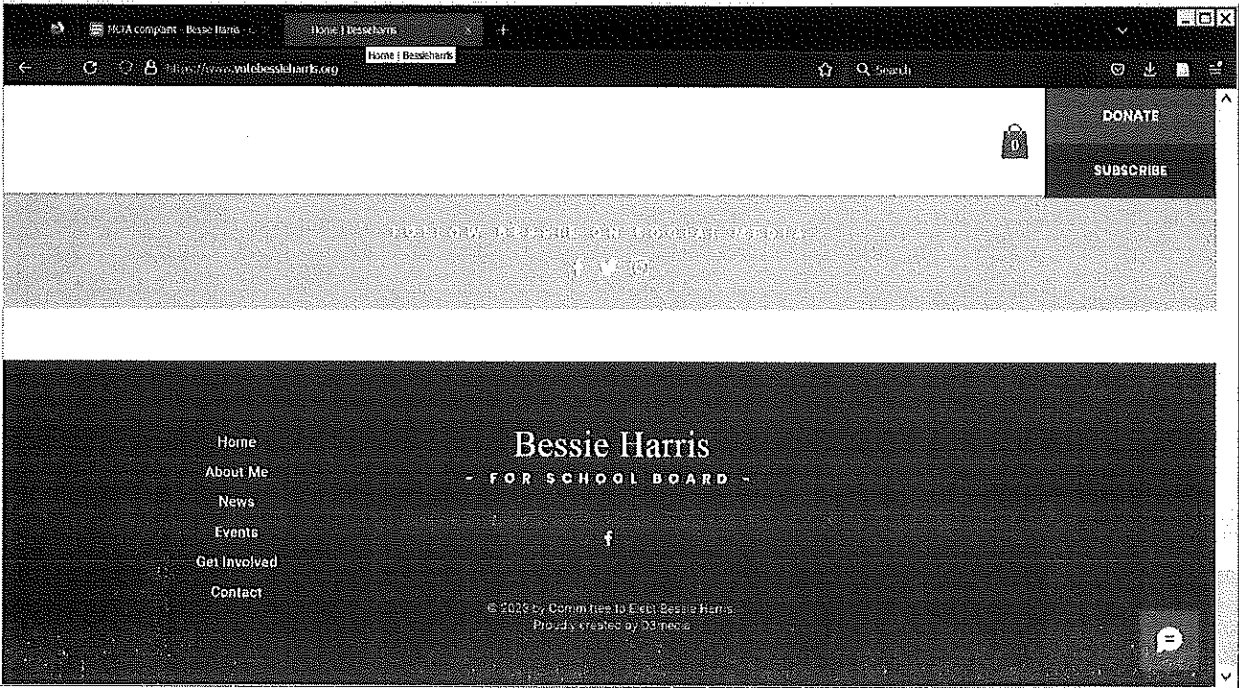
## Website

URL: <https://www.votebessieharris.org> (Screenshots taken on October 27, 2022.)

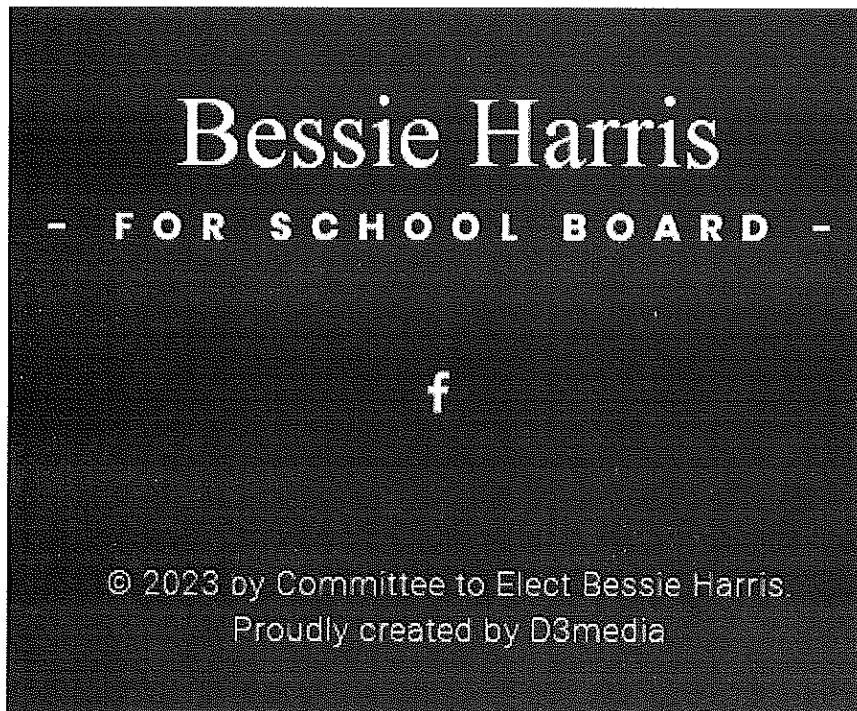








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## Section 4. Certification

*I certify that to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief, formed after a reasonable inquiry under the circumstances, each factual contention of this complaint is supported by evidence.*

X MR [Signature] 10/27/2022  
Signature of Complainant Date

## Section 5. Certification without Evidence (Supplemental to Section 4)

If, after a reasonable inquiry under the circumstances, you are unable to certify that certain factual contentions are supported by evidence as indicated above, you may make the following certification:

*I certify that to the best of my knowledge, information, or belief, there are grounds to conclude that the following specifically identified factual contentions are likely to be supported by evidence after a reasonable opportunity for further inquiry. Those specific contentions are:*

NOT APPLICABLE

X \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Complainant Date

## Section 6. Submission

This complaint is hereby submitted to:

Michigan Department of State  
Bureau of Elections  
Richard H. Austin Building – 1st Floor  
430 West Allegan Street  
Lansing, Michigan 48918



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE  
DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
LANSING

November 9, 2022

Bessie Harris  
5222 Brush St.  
Detroit, MI 48202

Re: *Schonert v. Harris*  
Campaign Finance Complaint No. 2022 - 11 - 192 - 47

Dear Ms. Harris:

The Department of State (Department) has received a formal complaint alleging you have violated MCL 169.247 of the Michigan Campaign Finance Act (MCFA) by failing to include an identification statement on a campaign website and yard signs. Photos were included with the complaint; a copy of the complaint is enclosed.

The MCFA and corresponding administrative rules require a person who produces printed material that relates to an election include the phrase "Paid for by [name and address of the person who paid for the item]." MCL 169.247(1), R 169.36(2). A knowing violation constitutes a misdemeanor offense punishable by a fine of up to \$1,000.00, imprisonment for up to 93 days, or both. MCL 169.247(6).

Upon review, the evidence submitted supports the conclusion that a potential violation of the Act has occurred. From the outset, the Department must consider whether the materials fall within the ambit of the MCFA. Because the materials explicitly advocate for the election or defeat of a candidate, or for the passage or defeat of a ballot proposal, the materials contain express advocacy as defined by the Act. MCL 169.206(2)(j). As explained above, such materials must contain a "paid for by" statement listing the name and address of the committee purchasing the materials. However, the evidence shows that the materials at issue here omit part or all of that required statement. That absence supports the conclusion that a potential violation of the MCFA has occurred.

After reaching this conclusion, the Act requires the Department to "endeavor to correct the violation or prevent a further violation by using informal methods" if it finds that "there may be reason to believe that a violation ... has occurred [.]". MCL 169.215(10). The objective of an informal resolution is "to correct the violation or prevent a further violation." *Id.*

Given this, the Department concludes that a formal warning is a sufficient resolution to the complaint and is hereby advising you that MCL 169.247(1) and R 169.36(2) require you to print



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a complete and accurate identification statement on all campaign materials, consisting of the phrase "paid for by" followed by the full name and address of your committee.

Note that all printed materials referencing you or your candidacy produced in the future must include this identification statement. For all materials currently in circulation, the paid for by statement must be corrected. If this information has been included in your materials and you wish to rebut the Department's conclusion, you must respond in writing to the Department within 15 business days of the date of this letter otherwise the Department will treat the complaint as resolved.

Please be advised that this notice has served to remind you of your obligation under the Act to identify your printed matter and may be used in future proceedings as evidence that tends to establish a knowing violation of the Act. A knowing violation is a misdemeanor offense and may merit referral to the Attorney General for enforcement action. MCL 169.247(6), 215(10).

Sincerely,

Regulatory Section  
Bureau of Elections  
Michigan Department of State

Enclosure  
c: Matthew Schonert