COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

Samantha I. Taylor	:	State Civil Service Commission
	:	
v.	:	
	:	
Allegheny County Assistance Office,	:	
Department of Human Services	:	Appeal No. 31746

Samantha I. Taylor	Amy Carnicella
Pro Se	Attorney for Appointing Authority

ADJUDICATION

This is an appeal by Samantha I. Taylor challenging her Level Two Alternative Discipline in Lieu of a Three-Day Suspension (hereinafter "ADLS") with final warning from regular Income Maintenance Caseworker employment with the Allegheny County Assistance Office, Department of Human Services.[1] A hearing was held on June 16, 2026, via video, before Commissioner Pamela M. Iovino.

The Commissioners have reviewed the Notes of Testimony and exhibits introduced at the hearing. The issue before the Commission is whether the appointing authority established good cause for appellant's Level Two ADLS.

[1] Under the ADLS, there was no effect on appellant's pay, seniority, or other benefits. The Level Two ADLS carries the same weight as if appellant served a three-day suspension. Comm. Ex. A. Consequently, the present appeal will be considered by the Commission as an appeal of a three-day suspension.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On December 23, 2025, appellant was issued a Level Two Alternative Discipline in Lieu of Suspension (hereinafter "ADLS") equivalent to a three-day suspension with final warning, from her regular Income Maintenance Caseworker employment. Comm. Ex. A; N.T. pp. 82-83, 85-86.

2. The December 23, 2025 letter provides the following reason for appellant's Level Two ADLS with final warning:

> The reason for this action is Violation of DHS Human Resource Policy 7173 (Controlling Absenteeism, Time and Sick Leave Abuse). A Pre-Disciplinary Conference was held on December 10, 2025. During this Pre-Disciplinary Conference, it was established that on October 23 from 8:00 to 11:30 and November 10 from 8:00 to 8:30 with no leave available resulting in unapproved, unpaid leave (AW). During this Pre-Disciplinary Conference, you were not able to provide information to rebut or mitigate this infraction.

Comm. Ex. A.

3. The appeal was properly raised before this Commission and was heard under Section 3003(7)(i) of Act 71 of 2018.[2] Comm. Exs. C, D.

4. Appellant is an Income Maintenance Caseworker, who reports directly to Income Maintenance Casework Supervisor (hereinafter "IMCS") Catherine Rogers' unit.[3] N.T. pp. 25-26, 112-113.

5. Appellant's work hours are from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. N.T. p. 33.

6. As an Income Maintenance Caseworker, appellant is responsible for reporting to work and being able to work on time. N.T. p. 24.

7. Appellant is responsible for entering her available leave into the appointing authority's employer self-service (hereinafter "ESS") system. N.T. pp. 40, 70.

[2] The request for a hearing under Section 3003(7)(ii) was denied due to an insufficient allegation of discrimination. Comm. Exs. C, D.

[3] Upon review, the transcript and transcript index has incorrectly spelled Catherine Rogers' name as Katherine Rogers. The Commission will use the spelling "Catherine" throughout this adjudication.

8. Appellant is responsible for tracking and controlling her available leave when it is needed to cover an absence. N.T. pp. 40, 70.

9. All employees, including appellant, receive notice that the DPW Personnel Manual 7173 entitled Controlling Absenteeism, Time, and Sick Leave Abuse (hereinafter "DPW Personnel Manual 7173) is in existence and applies to their employment. N.T. p. 53; AA Ex. 6.

10. Pursuant to the DPW Personnel Manual 7173, an unauthorized absence is either 1) an employee reports off indicating illness or an unforeseen emergency and the employer has a valid reason for not accepting the employee's claim or 2) the employee does not have time to cover the absence and is ineligible for any other paid or unpaid leave. N.T. p. 80; AA Ex. 6.

11. DPW Personnel Manual 7173 provides that if an unauthorized absence occurs beyond six months from the prior incident, the appointing authority does not go to the next step of progressive discipline. Instead, the level of discipline is repeated. N.T. p. 79; AA Ex. 6.

12. On January 22, 2025, appellant reviewed, signed, and agreed to abide by the appointing authority's Attendance, Call-Off and Absence Procedure Memorandum. N.T. p. 45; AA Ex. 8 (p. 4).

13. The Attendance, Call-Off and Absence Procedure Memorandum cites to the DPW Personnel Manual 7173 and states "failure to adhere to time and attendance requirements can lead to disciplinary action up to and including discharge." N.T. p. 47; AA Ex. 8 (p. 2).

14. An example of a failure to adhere to time and attendance requirements is absence without leave. N.T. p. 48; AA Ex. 8 (p. 2).

15. Pursuant to the Attendance, Call-Off and Absence Procedure Memorandum, all employees are responsible for managing their leave judiciously to ensure they remain within quotas for each leave type and to ensure they have leave available when time off is needed. N.T. p. 49; AA Ex. 8 (p. 4).

16. On January 22, 2025, appellant reviewed, signed, and agreed to abide by the Expectations for Allegheny County Assistance Office Employees. N.T. p. 51; AA Ex. 7.

17. The Expectations for Allegheny County Assistance Office Employees further cites to the DPW Personnel Manual 7173 and reiterates that failure to adhere to time and attendance requirements can lead to disciplinary action. N.T. p. 51; AA Ex. 7.

18. Appellant has received several prior disciplinary actions for being absent without leave. N.T. pp. 80, 87-88; AA Exs. 1-3.

19. On August 30, 2024, appellant received a Level One ADLS for being absent without leave and violating the DHS Policy 7173. N.T. pp. 80, 87-88; AA Ex. 1.

20. Appellant's Level One ADLS notice referenced appellant receiving a prior written reprimand and verbal reprimand for being absent without leave. N.T. p. 82; AA Ex. 1.

21. On February 3, 2025, appellant received a Level Two ADLS for being absent without leave and violating the DHS Policy 7173. N.T. pp. 80, 87-88; AA Ex. 2.

22. On March 27, 2025, appellant received a Level Two ADLS for being absent without leave and violating the DHS Policy 7173. N.T. pp. 80, 88; AA Ex. 3.

23. On October 23, 2025, appellant called IMCS Rogers to report that she would be late to work because of a water leak in her home. N.T. pp. 29, 36, 74-75.

24. On October 23, 2025, appellant was absent from 8:00 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. N.T. pp. 36, 115, 122-123.

25. Appellant did not have available leave to cover her absence on October 23, 2025. N.T. pp. 29, 75, 91, 125.

26. On November 10, 2025, appellant called IMCS Rogers to report that she was running late because the local trolley was stuck in transit. N.T. pp. 33, 38-39, 75, 115, 122-123.

27. On November 10, 2025, appellant was absent from 8:00 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. N.T. pp. 39, 75, 115, 122-123.

28. Appellant did not have available leave to cover her absence on November 10, 2025. N.T. pp. 75, 91, 125.

29. On November 14, 2025, appellant participated in a fact-finding conference. N.T. pp. 41, 43-45.

30. On December 8, 2025, appellant received notice of her pre-disciplinary conference (hereinafter "PDC") scheduled for December 10, 2025. N.T. pp. 53-56, 71; AA Ex. 4.

31. On December 10, 2025, appellant participated in her PDC and acknowledged she did not have sufficient leave to cover her absences on October 23, 2025, and November 10, 2025. N.T. pp. 57-58, 74-75; AA Ex. 5.

DISCUSSION

The issue before this Commission is whether the appointing authority has good cause to issue appellant's Level Two Alternative Discipline In Lieu of Suspension (hereinafter "ADLS") with final warning. The appointing authority charged appellant with being absent without leave. Comm. Ex. A.

In an appeal challenging the suspension of a regular status employee, the appointing authority bears the burden of establishing good cause for the personnel action. *White v. Commonwealth, Department of Corrections,* 110 Pa. Commw. 496, 532 A.2d 950 (1986); 71 Pa.C.S.A. §§ 2603 (c), 3003(7)(i). Good cause must be based upon meritorious criteria and be related to one's competency and ability to execute job duties properly. *White,* 110 Pa. Commw. at 498, 532 A.2d at 951.

In support of the Level Two ADLS with final warning, the appointing authority presented the testimony of Income Maintenance Casework Supervisor Catherine Rogers,[4] Human Resources Specialist Christine Grimm,[5] and Field Human Resource Officer 2 Anya Brown.[6] In response, appellant testified on her own behalf.

The focus of this appeal is whether appellant failed to have sufficient leave available to cover her absences on October 23, 2025, and November 10, 2025. There is no dispute that appellant was late to work on October 23, 2025, and

[4] Rogers is employed by the appointing authority as an Income Maintenance Casework Supervisor. N.T. p. 20, 23. Rogers works at the Warner Center of the County Assistance Office and she has been the Income Maintenance Casework Supervisor for twelve years. N.T. p. 22. As an Income Maintenance Casework Supervisor, Rogers oversees Income Maintenance Caseworkers as they process income maintenance applications, which include applications for food stamp benefits, medical benefits, and LIHEAP benefits. N.T. p. 23, 27.

[5] Grimm is currently employed as a Human Resources Specialist for Pennie. N.T. p. 64. As a Human Resources Specialist, Grimm is responsible for conducting research and providing guidance for a new Call Center's creation. N.T. pp. 65-66. At the time of appellant's Level Two ADLS, Grimm was employed as a Human Resource Analyst 2. N.T. p. 66. As a Human Resource Analyst 2, Grimm managed grievances, labor management meetings, and interactions with the union. Additionally, Grimm engaged in disciplinary processes, chaired pre-disciplinary conferences, and prepared disciplinary documents. N.T. p. 66.

[6] Brown is employed by the appointing authority as a Field Human Resource Officer 2. N.T. p. 101. As a Field Human Resource Officer 2, Brown is responsible for overseeing all human resource operations and providing support for the Allegheny County Assistance Offices and the Allegheny County Customer Service Center. N.T. p. 103.

November 10, 2025, without available leave to cover her absences. *See* Findings of Fact #23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28. Appellant has received prior notices about the necessity to manage her leave judiciously through her prior disciplinary actions charging her with being absent without leave. *See* Findings of Fact #19, 20, 21, 22.

The appointing authority's DPW Personnel Manual 7173 entitled Controlling Absenteeism, Time, and Sick Leave Abuse (hereinafter "DPW Personnel Manual 7173) defines unauthorized absences as follows: either 1) an employee reports off indicating illness or an unforeseen emergency and the employer has a valid reason for not accepting the employee's claim or 2) the employee does not have time to cover the absence and is ineligible for any other paid or unpaid leave. As an Income Maintenance Caseworker, appellant received notice that DPW Personnel Manual 7173 is applicable to her employment. *See* Findings of Fact # 9, 10, 11. Moreover, appellant signed and agreed to abide by the appointing authority's Attendance, Call-Off and Absence Procedure Memorandum and the Expectations for Allegheny County Assistance Office Employees. Both documents reference the expectation that failure to adhere to time and attendance requirements can lead to disciplinary action for being absent without leave. *See* Findings of Fact # 13, 14, 15, 16, 17.

Despite receiving prior discipline regarding being absent without leave and agreeing to abide by the aforementioned policies and memorandum, appellant argues the discipline imposed was disproportionate because the agency failed to consider her medical condition. Appellant asserted the appointing authority failed to take into consideration that she received a pancreas and kidney transplant in 2017 and her FMLA. N.T. pp. 115, 122. Despite her medical conditions, appellant asserted she is able to manage a high caseload. N.T. p. 117. Appellant contended

that although she received discipline based on leave, she did not receive any discipline related to her work performance. N.T. pp. 117-118. Yet, appellant conceded that the type of leave she could have entered for her absences on October 23, 2025, and November 10, 2025, were unrelated to her FMLA. N.T. p. 125.

Having carefully reviewed the record, as a whole, the Commission finds that the appointing authority established good cause for appellant's Level Two ADLS with final warning. We find the testimonies of Catherine Rogers, Christine Grimm, and Anya Brown persuasive and credible regarding appellant's absences without leave.[7] As an Income Maintenance Caseworker, appellant was responsible for ensuring that she had available leave to cover her absences. Appellant admitted she did not have available leave to cover her absences on October 23, 2025, and November 10, 2025. Although appellant argues the discipline was inappropriate in lieu of her medical conditions, she acknowledged the absences on October 23, 2025, and November 10, 2025, are not related to her FMLA leave. Indeed, as Brown credibly explained, appellant's FMLA leave is separate and apart from her leave for absences on the dates in question. N.T. pp. 132-133. While appellant argues that her prior discipline does not mention her work performance, appellant's disciplinary history reflects a consistent inability to have leave available to cover her absences. Appellant's absences without leave and her inability to manage her leave negatively reflect upon her competency and ability to execute her job duties as an Income Maintenance Caseworker. *White, supra.* Accordingly, we enter the following:

[7] It is the duty and within the purview of the Commission to determine the credibility of witnesses and the value of their testimony. *State Correctional Institution at Graterford, Department of Corrections, v. Jordan,* 95 Pa. Commw. 475, 478, 505 A.2d 339, 341 (1986).

CONCLUSION OF LAW

The appointing authority has presented evidence establishing good cause for suspension under Section 2603 of Act 71 of 2018.

ORDER

AND NOW, the State Civil Service Commission, by agreement of two its members,[8] dismisses the appeal of Samantha I. Taylor challenging her Level Two Alternative Discipline in Lieu of a Three-Day Suspension with final warning from regular Income Maintenance Caseworker employment with the Allegheny County Assistance Office, Department of Human Services, and sustains the action of the Allegheny County Assistance Office, Department of Human Services in the Level Two Alternative Discipline in Lieu of a Three-Day Suspension with final warning of Samantha I. Taylor from regular Income Maintenance Caseworker employment.

State Civil Service Commission

Gregory M. Lane
Commissioner

Pamela M. Iovino
Commissioner

Issued: October 22, 2026

[8] Chairwoman Maria P. Donatucci did not participate in the decision on this appeal.