

Dear Superintendent,

I am writing to you on behalf of myself, Chelsea Begnaud, as I believe I have been discriminated against on account of my sex and on the account that I was asked to resign in my position as the Agricultural Education teacher at Jasper County High School, and I am requesting that a formal complaint be filed on behalf of the procedures put forth by the Jasper County school system.

First, the School board of Jasper County High School, discriminated against me on account of my sex in that recently, the school board and Jasper county high school specifically hired a male Agriculture (AG) Science teacher with qualifications inferior to those I believe I hold.

I initially became concerned with potential issues of sex discrimination during a meeting on or about November 14th, 2016, with Dr. Eric Rubenstein, an Assistant Agricultural Professor at the University of Georgia (UGA). Dr. Rubenstein was assisting me in putting together my teaching portfolio in preparation for my interview with Jasper County High School the next morning. During the meeting, Dr. Rubenstein informed me that the school was extremely traditional regarding their views on Agriculture, and that they were initially searching for a male teacher to fill the position. Due to a limited receipt of applications, however, the school would have to settle for whoever they could find. As you know, the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL), the Georgia Fair Employment Practices Act (GA Code Sec. 45-19-20 et seq.) and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) all prohibit discrimination of potential hires on the basis of sex.

I received word on my acceptance into the position over the Thanksgiving holiday the following week. During my second period roughly two weeks after I started in my position (the week of January 23rd), Charles "Buddy" Cain, who was still assistant principal, and CTAE director at the time pulled me out of class and informed me that they appreciated me being there to fill in the position however, they were opening the hiring window back up to applicants. I was not informed during my interview, or throughout the hiring process that this position was temporary, so you can imagine my surprise when I found out that I was not going to be given a chance to prove my worth as an Agricultural Education Teacher. After reapplying, and going to through two additional interviews with the same interviewers as before, on March 31st, 2017, the Principal of Jasper County High School, now Coach Cain, approached me during seventh period and informed me that I would not receive the same position for the 2017-2018 school year. Mr. Cain stated that the school board had hired another applicant, who in Mr. Cain's words, "...had more experience." At the time I believed the statement true as I know I am a new teacher to the field.

I respect the idea of a veteran teacher taking over the well-established agricultural program. However, my concerns about the discrimination I was receiving continued to stir when I was informed by one of the Alumni parents, on April 17th at approximately 3:00 PM that at the April Board Members meeting, the new teacher that was approved to take over my position did not hold a degree in Agricultural Education. Additionally the new hire had never facilitated over an agricultural education program. It is stated in your classroom teacher requirements when applicants can begin completing their applications that all applicants must hold "...a valid Georgia certification authorizing service in grade levels and areas assigned, and must have student teaching, internship, or full-time teaching experience." In light of that, I do not believe I was given fair consideration for my qualifications and is the basis for my request for a formal investigation.

Although he may have be senior to me with regard to the number of years as a classroom teacher, being an Agricultural Education teacher requires much more than knowing content in the classroom. On the

account that I have proven to be successful in my endeavors as the Jasper County Agricultural Education Teacher, and the Jasper County FFA Advisor. Being an agricultural education teacher requires many outlets and responsibilities such as planning lessons, making SAE visits, taking trips around the state for FFA events, all of which can be very overwhelming for someone starting out in the field. Knowing content in the classroom is only half the battle. Hiring someone who does not have experience seeing how a program is run effectively has the potential of detrimental effects to our chapter and agricultural education program.

I graduated with a Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Education with a 3.78 GPA and hold a Level T-4 Georgia Teacher Certified Agricultural Education 6-12. As a FFA member throughout my academic years and a member of the Collegiate in Future Farmers of America (FFA) at UGA, I believe my experiences have provided me with specific insight as to what being an agricultural teacher involves. I attended Georgia Governor's Honors Program in Environmental Agricultural science, and was also selected as the National and Georgia FFA Convention delegate twice in my FFA career. Additional credentials I possess are that I received my Greenhand, Chapter, State, and American Degree, the four types of Degrees an FFA member can receive. I am confident that an evaluation of the two applicant's resumes will validate these facts. The new teacher was hired over myself, a qualified female teacher, in the position solely due to the fact that he was male.

Second, other individuals can testify to the Principal of Jasper County High School, Charles "Buddy" Cain sexist attitude based on previous comments he has made. On or about April 14th, multiple students at the school reported that while Mr. Cain was speaking with some of the secretaries, he made a comment in the presence of staff and students that, "...there is no way she (Chelsea) could ever do as much as a male teacher could." Upon hearing this, one of the female students responded, "...who do you think taught us to wire?" Furthermore, as the student left the office, she overheard the school secretary, Kerri Norris, telling Mr. Cain that it was very unprofessional to speak of teachers in that manner, especially in his newly acquired position as the Principal.

I know there are many students, faculty, staff, alumni parents, state FFA staff, UGA Agricultural, Leadership, Education, and Communication Department staff, and colleagues that are quite appalled at the way this situation has unfolded. Considering in my five months as Jasper County High School's Agricultural Education Teacher this chapter has been recognized more than when the previous teachers were employed there. While under contract, we have had a Career Development Team compete at the State Level, one student qualified as a region Proficiency winner and place 2nd at the state level, one student received the coveted State Star Farmer award, both at the region and state level (which has never happened in Jasper County FFA history). The chapter has received donations of FFA Official dress items for FFA members to use if they cannot afford them. Six students received their State FFA degrees. Jasper County FFA Chapter was recognized as a Silver emblem chapter based on our National Chapter application, placing them in the top percentile of all chapters throughout the state of Georgia, and just this past week, we received a \$1,183 grant from Tractor Supply Company to put towards getting the greenhouse functioning which will provide many opportunities for program growth and community involvement.

Ultimately, this narrow-minded attitude and gender stereotyping is unprofessional and is inconsistent with the values I hope to impart in the next generation. This is the 21st century and for an individual in Mr. Cain's position to be exhibiting such discriminatory attitudes and practices is incredibly unprofessional and does not align with the attitudes your school system portrays. As a female in this generation who has worked hard to be the person I am today, I am appalled that I have experienced

such discrimination, and even more deeply concerned given that the person who made allegations against me was my confidant and the principal of the school. In his actions he violate both the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) all prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in his conduct in the presence of faculty members and Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 in his conduct in the presence if the student.

I respectfully request a formal investigation of this matter in hopes that this situation does not affect another female individual after my time at Jasper County comes to an end. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Chelsea Begnaud

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