

**STATE OF MINNESOTA  
CAMPAIGN FINANCE AND PUBLIC DISCLOSURE BOARD**

**CONCILIATION AGREEMENT**

In the matter of the Benson (Michelle) for Senate committee (17027);

1. Benson (Michelle) for Senate is the principal campaign committee of Senator Michelle Benson. The aggregate special source contribution limit, which includes contributions from lobbyists, political committees and funds, and associations not registered with the Board, was \$20,600 for state senate candidates during the 2019-2020 election cycle segment. The committee's 2019 and 2020 year-end reports of receipts and expenditures disclosed a combined total of \$22,975 in special source contributions. The \$2,375 in excess special source contributions was not returned within 90 days and is therefore deemed accepted under Minnesota Statutes section 10A.15, subdivision 3.
2. The Benson committee self-reported the issue to the Board and has returned \$2,450 to special source contributors. The committee's attorney, R. Reid LeBeau, explained that the violation "was the result of a factual mistake as to the applicable limit amount and a computational mistake as to the amount that was contributed."
3. The parties agree that the committee accepted excessive contributions from special source contributors in violation of Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, during the 2019-2020 election cycle segment. This is the committee's third violation of the aggregate special source limit. The committee first exceeded the aggregate special source limit by \$1,000 in 2010. In 2018, the committee again exceeded the aggregate special source limit by \$3,600. In a conciliation agreement entered into in 2019, the committee was fined \$7,200 for the 2018 violation, but payment of \$5,400 of the penalty was stayed on the condition that the committee have no other violations of the special source limit during the 2019-2020 election cycle segment. Because the committee has not complied with this condition, the stayed amount of \$5,400 is due immediately under the terms of the 2019 conciliation agreement.
4. To avoid a similar violation in the future, the committee has engaged professional assistance for the treasurer's duties. The committee agrees to ensure that the committee's treasurer reviews and enters contributions into the Campaign Finance Reporter software within 30 days of receipt so that excess contributions may be returned during the 90-day grace period.
5. The committee also agrees to the imposition of a civil penalty of \$4,750, which is two times the amount of the violation, for accepting contributions in excess of the limit imposed by Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, during the 2019-2020 election cycle segment. Of this amount, \$1,185 is due within 30 days of the date the agreement is signed by both parties. The remaining \$3,565 of the penalty is, by the terms of this agreement, stayed until January 1, 2023. If the committee violates Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, before January 1, 2023, the outstanding civil penalty is due immediately. If the

committee does not violate Minnesota Statutes section 10A.27, subdivision 11, before January 1, 2023, the outstanding civil penalty is waived.

6. The committee also agrees to pay the \$5,400 that is due for not complying with the terms of the 2019 conciliation agreement. The committee further agrees that it will retain a professional, third-party bookkeeper through the end of the 2021 – 2022 election cycle segment or until the committee terminates its registration with the Board, whichever occurs first.

7. If the committee does not comply with the provisions of this agreement, this matter may be reopened by the Board and the Board may take such actions as it deems appropriate.

/s/ Michelle Benson  
Senator Michelle Benson  
Benson (Michelle) for Senate

Dated: September 21, 2021

/s/ Stephen Swanson  
Stephen Swanson, Chair  
Campaign Finance and Public Disclosure Board

Dated: September 1, 2021