

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The School Code is amended by changing Section 24-12 as follows:

(105 ILCS 5/24-12)

Sec. 24-12. Removal or dismissal of teachers in contractual continued service.

(a) This subsection (a) applies only to honorable dismissals and recalls in which the notice of dismissal is provided on or before the end of the 2010-2011 school term. If a teacher in contractual continued service is removed or dismissed as a result of a decision of the board to decrease the number of teachers employed by the board or to discontinue some particular type of teaching service, written notice shall be mailed to the teacher and also given the teacher either by certified mail, return receipt requested or personal delivery with receipt at least 60 days before the end of the school term, together with a statement of honorable dismissal and the reason therefor, and in all such cases the board shall first remove or dismiss all teachers who have not entered upon contractual continued service before removing or dismissing any teacher who has entered upon contractual continued service

and who is legally qualified to hold a position currently held by a teacher who has not entered upon contractual continued service.

As between teachers who have entered upon contractual continued service, the teacher or teachers with the shorter length of continuing service with the district shall be dismissed first unless an alternative method of determining the sequence of dismissal is established in a collective bargaining agreement or contract between the board and a professional faculty members' organization and except that this provision shall not impair the operation of any affirmative action program in the district, regardless of whether it exists by operation of law or is conducted on a voluntary basis by the board. Any teacher dismissed as a result of such decrease or discontinuance shall be paid all earned compensation on or before the third business day following the last day of pupil attendance in the regular school term.

If the board has any vacancies for the following school term or within one calendar year from the beginning of the following school term, the positions thereby becoming available shall be tendered to the teachers so removed or dismissed so far as they are legally qualified to hold such positions; provided, however, that if the number of honorable dismissal notices based on economic necessity exceeds 15% of the number of full-time equivalent positions filled by

certified employees (excluding principals and administrative personnel) during the preceding school year, then if the board has any vacancies for the following school term or within 2 calendar years from the beginning of the following school term, the positions so becoming available shall be tendered to the teachers who were so notified and removed or dismissed whenever they are legally qualified to hold such positions. Each board shall, in consultation with any exclusive employee representatives, each year establish a list, categorized by positions, showing the length of continuing service of each teacher who is qualified to hold any such positions, unless an alternative method of determining a sequence of dismissal is established as provided for in this Section, in which case a list shall be made in accordance with the alternative method. Copies of the list shall be distributed to the exclusive employee representative on or before February 1 of each year. Whenever the number of honorable dismissal notices based upon economic necessity exceeds 5, or 150% of the average number of teachers honorably dismissed in the preceding 3 years, whichever is more, then the board also shall hold a public hearing on the question of the dismissals. Following the hearing and board review, the action to approve any such reduction shall require a majority vote of the board members.

(b) If any teacher, whether or not in contractual continued service, is removed or dismissed as a result of a decision of a school board to decrease the number of teachers

employed by the board, a decision of a school board to discontinue some particular type of teaching service, or a reduction in the number of programs or positions in a special education joint agreement, then written notice must be mailed to the teacher and also given to the teacher either by electronic mail, certified mail, return receipt requested, or personal delivery with receipt on or before April 15, together with a statement of honorable dismissal and the reason therefor, and in all such cases the sequence of dismissal shall occur in accordance with this subsection (b); except that this subsection (b) shall not impair the operation of any affirmative action program in the school district, regardless of whether it exists by operation of law or is conducted on a voluntary basis by the board.

Each teacher must be categorized into one or more positions for which the teacher is qualified to hold, based upon legal qualifications and any other qualifications established in a district or joint agreement job description, on or before the May 10 prior to the school year during which the sequence of dismissal is determined. Within each position and subject to agreements made by the joint committee on honorable dismissals that are authorized by subsection (c) of this Section, the school district or joint agreement must establish 4 groupings of teachers qualified to hold the position as follows:

- (1) Grouping one shall consist of each teacher who is

not in contractual continued service and who (i) has not received a performance evaluation rating, (ii) is employed for one school term or less to replace a teacher on leave, or (iii) is employed on a part-time basis. "Part-time basis" for the purposes of this subsection (b) means a teacher who is employed to teach less than a full-day, teacher workload or less than 5 days of the normal student attendance week, unless otherwise provided for in a collective bargaining agreement between the district and the exclusive representative of the district's teachers. For the purposes of this Section, a teacher (A) who is employed as a full-time teacher but who actually teaches or is otherwise present and participating in the district's educational program for less than a school term or (B) who, in the immediately previous school term, was employed on a full-time basis and actually taught or was otherwise present and participated in the district's educational program for 120 days or more is not considered employed on a part-time basis.

(2) Grouping 2 shall consist of each teacher with a Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory performance evaluation rating on either of the teacher's last 2 performance evaluation ratings.

(3) Grouping 3 shall consist of each teacher with a performance evaluation rating of at least Satisfactory or Proficient on both of the teacher's last 2 performance

evaluation ratings, if 2 ratings are available, or on the teacher's last performance evaluation rating, if only one rating is available, unless the teacher qualifies for placement into grouping 4.

(4) Grouping 4 shall consist of each teacher whose last 2 performance evaluation ratings are Excellent and each teacher with 2 Excellent performance evaluation ratings out of the teacher's last 3 performance evaluation ratings with a third rating of Satisfactory or Proficient.

Among teachers qualified to hold a position, teachers must be dismissed in the order of their groupings, with teachers in grouping one dismissed first and teachers in grouping 4 dismissed last.

Within grouping one, the sequence of dismissal must be at the discretion of the school district or joint agreement. Within grouping 2, the sequence of dismissal must be based upon average performance evaluation ratings, with the teacher or teachers with the lowest average performance evaluation rating dismissed first. A teacher's average performance evaluation rating must be calculated using the average of the teacher's last 2 performance evaluation ratings, if 2 ratings are available, or the teacher's last performance evaluation rating, if only one rating is available, using the following numerical values: 4 for Excellent; 3 for Proficient or Satisfactory; 2 for Needs Improvement; and 1 for Unsatisfactory. As between or among teachers in grouping 2

with the same average performance evaluation rating and within each of groupings 3 and 4, the teacher or teachers with the shorter length of continuing service with the school district or joint agreement must be dismissed first unless an alternative method of determining the sequence of dismissal is established in a collective bargaining agreement or contract between the board and a professional faculty members' organization.

Each board, including the governing board of a joint agreement, shall, in consultation with any exclusive employee representatives, each year establish a sequence of honorable dismissal list categorized by positions and the groupings defined in this subsection (b). Copies of the list showing each teacher by name, along with the race or ethnicity of the teacher if provided by the teacher, and categorized by positions and the groupings defined in this subsection (b) must be distributed to the exclusive bargaining representative at least 75 days before the end of the school term, provided that the school district or joint agreement may, with notice to any exclusive employee representatives, move teachers from grouping one into another grouping during the period of time from 75 days until April 15. Each year, each board shall also establish, in consultation with any exclusive employee representatives, a list showing the length of continuing service of each teacher who is qualified to hold any such positions, unless an alternative method of determining a

sequence of dismissal is established as provided for in this Section, in which case a list must be made in accordance with the alternative method. Copies of the list must be distributed to the exclusive employee representative at least 75 days before the end of the school term.

Any teacher dismissed as a result of such decrease or discontinuance must be paid all earned compensation on or before the third business day following the last day of pupil attendance in the regular school term.

If the board or joint agreement has any vacancies for the following school term or within one calendar year from the beginning of the following school term, the positions thereby becoming available must be tendered to the teachers so removed or dismissed who were in grouping 3 or 4 of the sequence of dismissal and are qualified to hold the positions, based upon legal qualifications and any other qualifications established in a district or joint agreement job description, on or before the May 10 prior to the date of the positions becoming available, provided that if the number of honorable dismissal notices based on economic necessity exceeds 15% of the number of full-time equivalent positions filled by certified employees (excluding principals and administrative personnel) during the preceding school year, then the recall period is for the following school term or within 2 calendar years from the beginning of the following school term. If the board or joint agreement has any vacancies within the period from the

beginning of the following school term through February 1 of the following school term (unless a date later than February 1, but no later than 6 months from the beginning of the following school term, is established in a collective bargaining agreement), the positions thereby becoming available must be tendered to the teachers so removed or dismissed who were in grouping 2 of the sequence of dismissal due to one "needs improvement" rating on either of the teacher's last 2 performance evaluation ratings, provided that, if 2 ratings are available, the other performance evaluation rating used for grouping purposes is "satisfactory", "proficient", or "excellent", and are qualified to hold the positions, based upon legal qualifications and any other qualifications established in a district or joint agreement job description, on or before the May 10 prior to the date of the positions becoming available. On and after July 1, 2014 (the effective date of Public Act 98-648), the preceding sentence shall apply to teachers removed or dismissed by honorable dismissal, even if notice of honorable dismissal occurred during the 2013-2014 school year. Among teachers eligible for recall pursuant to the preceding sentence, the order of recall must be in inverse order of dismissal, unless an alternative order of recall is established in a collective bargaining agreement or contract between the board and a professional faculty members' organization. Whenever the number of honorable dismissal

notices based upon economic necessity exceeds 5 notices or 150% of the average number of teachers honorably dismissed in the preceding 3 years, whichever is more, then the school board or governing board of a joint agreement, as applicable, shall also hold a public hearing on the question of the dismissals. Following the hearing and board review, the action to approve any such reduction shall require a majority vote of the board members.

For purposes of this subsection (b), subject to agreement on an alternative definition reached by the joint committee described in subsection (c) of this Section, a teacher's performance evaluation rating means the overall performance evaluation rating resulting from an annual or biennial performance evaluation conducted pursuant to Article 24A of this Code by the school district or joint agreement determining the sequence of dismissal, not including any performance evaluation conducted during or at the end of a remediation period. No more than one evaluation rating each school term shall be one of the evaluation ratings used for the purpose of determining the sequence of dismissal. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection for any performance evaluations conducted during or at the end of a remediation period, if multiple performance evaluations are conducted in a school term, only the rating from the last evaluation conducted prior to establishing the sequence of honorable dismissal list in such school term shall be the one evaluation

rating from that school term used for the purpose of determining the sequence of dismissal. Averaging ratings from multiple evaluations is not permitted unless otherwise agreed to in a collective bargaining agreement or contract between the board and a professional faculty members' organization. The preceding 3 sentences are not a legislative declaration that existing law does or does not already require that only one performance evaluation each school term shall be used for the purpose of determining the sequence of dismissal. For performance evaluation ratings determined prior to September 1, 2012, any school district or joint agreement with a performance evaluation rating system that does not use either of the rating category systems specified in subsection (d) of Section 24A-5 of this Code for all teachers must establish a basis for assigning each teacher a rating that complies with subsection (d) of Section 24A-5 of this Code for all of the performance evaluation ratings that are to be used to determine the sequence of dismissal. A teacher's grouping and ranking on a sequence of honorable dismissal shall be deemed a part of the teacher's performance evaluation, and that information shall be disclosed to the exclusive bargaining representative as part of a sequence of honorable dismissal list, notwithstanding any laws prohibiting disclosure of such information. A performance evaluation rating may be used to determine the sequence of dismissal, notwithstanding the pendency of any grievance resolution or arbitration procedures

relating to the performance evaluation. If a teacher has received at least one performance evaluation rating conducted by the school district or joint agreement determining the sequence of dismissal and a subsequent performance evaluation is not conducted in any school year in which such evaluation is required to be conducted under Section 24A-5 of this Code, the teacher's performance evaluation rating for that school year for purposes of determining the sequence of dismissal is deemed Proficient, except that, during any time in which the Governor has declared a disaster due to a public health emergency pursuant to Section 7 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act, this default to Proficient does not apply to any teacher who has entered into contractual continued service and who was deemed Excellent on his or her most recent evaluation. During any time in which the Governor has declared a disaster due to a public health emergency pursuant to Section 7 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act and unless the school board and any exclusive bargaining representative have completed the performance rating for teachers or have mutually agreed to an alternate performance rating, any teacher who has entered into contractual continued service, whose most recent evaluation was deemed Excellent, and whose performance evaluation is not conducted when the evaluation is required to be conducted shall receive a teacher's performance rating deemed Excellent. A school board and any exclusive bargaining representative may

mutually agree to an alternate performance rating for teachers not in contractual continued service during any time in which the Governor has declared a disaster due to a public health emergency pursuant to Section 7 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act, as long as the agreement is in writing. If a performance evaluation rating is nullified as the result of an arbitration, administrative agency, or court determination, then the school district or joint agreement is deemed to have conducted a performance evaluation for that school year, but the performance evaluation rating may not be used in determining the sequence of dismissal.

Nothing in this subsection (b) shall be construed as limiting the right of a school board or governing board of a joint agreement to dismiss a teacher not in contractual continued service in accordance with Section 24-11 of this Code.

Any provisions regarding the sequence of honorable dismissals and recall of honorably dismissed teachers in a collective bargaining agreement entered into on or before January 1, 2011 and in effect on June 13, 2011 (the effective date of Public Act 97-8) that may conflict with Public Act 97-8 shall remain in effect through the expiration of such agreement or June 30, 2013, whichever is earlier.

(c) Each school district and special education joint agreement must use a joint committee composed of equal representation selected by the school board and its teachers

or, if applicable, the exclusive bargaining representative of its teachers, to address the matters described in paragraphs (1) through (5) of this subsection (c) pertaining to honorable dismissals under subsection (b) of this Section.

(1) The joint committee must consider and may agree to criteria for excluding from grouping 2 and placing into grouping 3 a teacher whose last 2 performance evaluations include a Needs Improvement and either a Proficient or Excellent.

(2) The joint committee must consider and may agree to an alternative definition for grouping 4, which definition must take into account prior performance evaluation ratings and may take into account other factors that relate to the school district's or program's educational objectives. An alternative definition for grouping 4 may not permit the inclusion of a teacher in the grouping with a Needs Improvement or Unsatisfactory performance evaluation rating on either of the teacher's last 2 performance evaluation ratings.

(3) The joint committee may agree to including within the definition of a performance evaluation rating a performance evaluation rating administered by a school district or joint agreement other than the school district or joint agreement determining the sequence of dismissal.

(4) For each school district or joint agreement that administers performance evaluation ratings that are

inconsistent with either of the rating category systems specified in subsection (d) of Section 24A-5 of this Code, the school district or joint agreement must consult with the joint committee on the basis for assigning a rating that complies with subsection (d) of Section 24A-5 of this Code to each performance evaluation rating that will be used in a sequence of dismissal.

(5) Upon request by a joint committee member submitted to the employing board by no later than 10 days after the distribution of the sequence of honorable dismissal list, a representative of the employing board shall, within 5 days after the request, provide to members of the joint committee a list showing the most recent and prior performance evaluation ratings of each teacher identified only by length of continuing service in the district or joint agreement and not by name. If, after review of this list, a member of the joint committee has a good faith belief that a disproportionate number of teachers with greater length of continuing service with the district or joint agreement have received a recent performance evaluation rating lower than the prior rating, the member may request that the joint committee review the list to assess whether such a trend may exist. Following the joint committee's review, but by no later than the end of the applicable school term, the joint committee or any member or members of the joint committee may submit a report of

the review to the employing board and exclusive bargaining representative, if any. Nothing in this paragraph (5) shall impact the order of honorable dismissal or a school district's or joint agreement's authority to carry out a dismissal in accordance with subsection (b) of this Section.

Agreement by the joint committee as to a matter requires the majority vote of all committee members, and if the joint committee does not reach agreement on a matter, then the otherwise applicable requirements of subsection (b) of this Section shall apply. Except as explicitly set forth in this subsection (c), a joint committee has no authority to agree to any further modifications to the requirements for honorable dismissals set forth in subsection (b) of this Section. The joint committee must be established, and the first meeting of the joint committee each school year must occur on or before December 1.

The joint committee must reach agreement on a matter on or before February 1 of a school year in order for the agreement of the joint committee to apply to the sequence of dismissal determined during that school year. Subject to the February 1 deadline for agreements, the agreement of a joint committee on a matter shall apply to the sequence of dismissal until the agreement is amended or terminated by the joint committee.

The provisions of the Open Meetings Act shall not apply to meetings of a joint committee created under this subsection

(c) .

(d) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this subsection (d), the requirements and dismissal procedures of Section 24-16.5 of this Code shall apply to any dismissal sought under Section 24-16.5 of this Code.

(1) If a dismissal of a teacher in contractual continued service is sought for any reason or cause other than an honorable dismissal under subsections (a) or (b) of this Section or a dismissal sought under Section 24-16.5 of this Code, including those under Section 10-22.4, the board must first approve a motion containing specific charges by a majority vote of all its members. Written notice of such charges, including a bill of particulars and the teacher's right to request a hearing, must be mailed to the teacher and also given to the teacher either by electronic mail, certified mail, return receipt requested, or personal delivery with receipt within 5 days of the adoption of the motion. Any written notice sent on or after July 1, 2012 shall inform the teacher of the right to request a hearing before a mutually selected hearing officer, with the cost of the hearing officer split equally between the teacher and the board, or a hearing before a board-selected hearing officer, with the cost of the hearing officer paid by the board.

Before setting a hearing on charges stemming from causes that are considered remediable, a board must give

the teacher reasonable warning, in writing, stating specifically the causes that, if not removed, may result in charges; however, no such written warning is required if the causes have been the subject of a remediation plan pursuant to Article 24A of this Code. The written warning must specify the nature of the alleged misconduct that needs to be remedied. Nothing in this Section precludes a board from asserting that the specific conduct alleged in the original warning is part of an alleged pattern of behavior, but any subsequent action must be reasonably related to the specific conduct alleged in the original warning. The teacher may request and shall be granted an opportunity to respond to the findings in the written warning, either in person or in writing before the board, prior to the board's formal vote to approve the warning. If the teacher is in disagreement with the final action of the board, the teacher may take the written warning to binding arbitration. To do so, the exclusive bargaining representative, if any, or the teacher, if no representative exists, shall, within 10 days after receipt of the board's decision, file for arbitration in accordance with the procedures set forth in the collective bargaining agreement between the board and the exclusive bargaining representative, if any. If no arbitration procedures exist in the collective bargaining agreement, the parties shall file for arbitration with the Federal

Mediation and Conciliation Service or the American Arbitration Association. Within 10 days after the receipt of the list of arbitrators from the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service or the American Arbitration Association, the parties shall meet to alternately strike names from the list until one name remains. The rules of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service or the American Arbitration Association shall govern the proceedings. The arbitrator shall have the power to render a decision on the written warning, which shall be final and binding on both parties. Each party shall pay one-half of the cost of the arbitration proceedings. Each party is entitled to representation of the party's choosing at all stages in this process.

If, in the opinion of the board, the interests of the school require it, the board may suspend the teacher without pay, pending the hearing, but if the board's dismissal or removal is not sustained, the teacher shall not suffer the loss of any salary or benefits by reason of the suspension.

(2) No hearing upon the charges is required unless the teacher within 17 days after receiving notice requests in writing of the board that a hearing be scheduled before a mutually selected hearing officer or a hearing officer selected by the board. The secretary of the school board shall forward a copy of the notice to the State Board of

Education.

(3) Within 5 business days after receiving a notice of hearing in which either notice to the teacher was sent before July 1, 2012 or, if the notice was sent on or after July 1, 2012, the teacher has requested a hearing before a mutually selected hearing officer, the State Board of Education shall provide a list of 5 prospective, impartial hearing officers from the master list of qualified, impartial hearing officers maintained by the State Board of Education. Each person on the master list must (i) be accredited by a national arbitration organization and have had a minimum of 5 years of experience directly related to labor and employment relations matters between employers and employees or their exclusive bargaining representatives and (ii) beginning September 1, 2012, have participated in training provided or approved by the State Board of Education for teacher dismissal hearing officers so that he or she is familiar with issues generally involved in evaluative and non-evaluative dismissals.

If notice to the teacher was sent before July 1, 2012 or, if the notice was sent on or after July 1, 2012, the teacher has requested a hearing before a mutually selected hearing officer, the board and the teacher or their legal representatives within 3 business days shall alternately strike one name from the list provided by the State Board of Education until only one name remains. Unless waived by

the teacher, the teacher shall have the right to proceed first with the striking. Within 3 business days of receipt of the list provided by the State Board of Education, the board and the teacher or their legal representatives shall each have the right to reject all prospective hearing officers named on the list and notify the State Board of Education of such rejection. Within 3 business days after receiving this notification, the State Board of Education shall appoint a qualified person from the master list who did not appear on the list sent to the parties to serve as the hearing officer, unless the parties notify it that they have chosen to alternatively select a hearing officer under paragraph (4) of this subsection (d).

If the teacher has requested a hearing before a hearing officer selected by the board, the board shall select one name from the master list of qualified impartial hearing officers maintained by the State Board of Education within 3 business days after receipt and shall notify the State Board of Education of its selection.

A hearing officer mutually selected by the parties, selected by the board, or selected through an alternative selection process under paragraph (4) of this subsection (d) (A) must not be a resident of the school district, (B) must be available to commence the hearing within 75 days and conclude the hearing within 120 days after being

selected as the hearing officer, and (C) must issue a decision as to whether the teacher must be dismissed and give a copy of that decision to both the teacher and the board within 30 days from the conclusion of the hearing or closure of the record, whichever is later.

Any hearing convened during a public health emergency pursuant to Section 7 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act may be convened remotely. Any hearing officer for a hearing convened during a public health emergency pursuant to Section 7 of the Illinois Emergency Management Agency Act may voluntarily withdraw from the hearing and another hearing officer shall be selected or appointed pursuant to this Section.

In this paragraph, "pre-hearing procedures" refers to the pre-hearing procedures under Section 51.55 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code and "hearing" refers to the hearing under Section 51.60 of Title 23 of the Illinois Administrative Code. Any teacher who has been charged with engaging in acts of corporal punishment, physical abuse, grooming, or sexual misconduct and who previously paused pre-hearing procedures or a hearing pursuant to Public Act 101-643 must proceed with selection of a hearing officer or hearing date, or both, within the timeframes established by this paragraph (3) and paragraphs (4) through (6) of this subsection (d), unless the timeframes are mutually waived in writing by both

parties, and all timelines set forth in this Section in cases concerning corporal punishment, physical abuse, grooming, or sexual misconduct shall be reset to begin the day after April 22, 2022 (the effective date of Public Act 102-708). Any teacher charged with engaging in acts of corporal punishment, physical abuse, grooming, or sexual misconduct on or after April 22, 2022 (the effective date of Public Act 102-708) may not pause pre-hearing procedures or a hearing.

(4) In the alternative to selecting a hearing officer from the list received from the State Board of Education or accepting the appointment of a hearing officer by the State Board of Education or if the State Board of Education cannot provide a list or appoint a hearing officer that meets the foregoing requirements, the board and the teacher or their legal representatives may mutually agree to select an impartial hearing officer who is not on the master list either by direct appointment by the parties or by using procedures for the appointment of an arbitrator established by the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service or the American Arbitration Association. The parties shall notify the State Board of Education of their intent to select a hearing officer using an alternative procedure within 3 business days of receipt of a list of prospective hearing officers provided by the State Board of Education, notice of appointment of

a hearing officer by the State Board of Education, or receipt of notice from the State Board of Education that it cannot provide a list that meets the foregoing requirements, whichever is later.

(5) If the notice of dismissal was sent to the teacher before July 1, 2012, the fees and costs for the hearing officer must be paid by the State Board of Education. If the notice of dismissal was sent to the teacher on or after July 1, 2012, the hearing officer's fees and costs must be paid as follows in this paragraph (5). The fees and permissible costs for the hearing officer must be determined by the State Board of Education. If the board and the teacher or their legal representatives mutually agree to select an impartial hearing officer who is not on a list received from the State Board of Education, they may agree to supplement the fees determined by the State Board to the hearing officer, at a rate consistent with the hearing officer's published professional fees. If the hearing officer is mutually selected by the parties, then the board and the teacher or their legal representatives shall each pay 50% of the fees and costs and any supplemental allowance to which they agree. If the hearing officer is selected by the board, then the board shall pay 100% of the hearing officer's fees and costs. The fees and costs must be paid to the hearing officer within 14 days after the board and the teacher or their legal

representatives receive the hearing officer's decision set forth in paragraph (7) of this subsection (d).

(6) The teacher is required to answer the bill of particulars and aver affirmative matters in his or her defense, and the time for initially doing so and the time for updating such answer and defenses after pre-hearing discovery must be set by the hearing officer. The State Board of Education shall promulgate rules so that each party has a fair opportunity to present its case and to ensure that the dismissal process proceeds in a fair and expeditious manner. These rules shall address, without limitation, discovery and hearing scheduling conferences; the teacher's initial answer and affirmative defenses to the bill of particulars and the updating of that information after pre-hearing discovery; provision for written interrogatories and requests for production of documents; the requirement that each party initially disclose to the other party and then update the disclosure no later than 10 calendar days prior to the commencement of the hearing, the names and addresses of persons who may be called as witnesses at the hearing, a summary of the facts or opinions each witness will testify to, and all other documents and materials, including information maintained electronically, relevant to its own as well as the other party's case (the hearing officer may exclude witnesses and exhibits not identified and shared, except

those offered in rebuttal for which the party could not reasonably have anticipated prior to the hearing); pre-hearing discovery and preparation, including provision for written interrogatories and requests for production of documents, provided that discovery depositions are prohibited; the conduct of the hearing; the right of each party to be represented by counsel, the offer of evidence and witnesses and the cross-examination of witnesses; the authority of the hearing officer to issue subpoenas and subpoenas duces tecum, provided that the hearing officer may limit the number of witnesses to be subpoenaed on behalf of each party to no more than 7; the length of post-hearing briefs; and the form, length, and content of hearing officers' decisions. The hearing officer shall hold a hearing and render a final decision for dismissal pursuant to Article 24A of this Code or shall report to the school board findings of fact and a recommendation as to whether or not the teacher must be dismissed for conduct. The hearing officer shall commence the hearing within 75 days and conclude the hearing within 120 days after being selected as the hearing officer, provided that the hearing officer may modify these timelines upon the showing of good cause or mutual agreement of the parties. Good cause for the purpose of this subsection (d) shall mean the illness or otherwise unavoidable emergency of the teacher, district representative, their legal representatives, the

hearing officer, or an essential witness as indicated in each party's pre-hearing submission. In a dismissal hearing pursuant to Article 24A of this Code in which a witness is a student or is under the age of 18, the hearing officer must make accommodations for the witness, as provided under paragraph (6.5) of this subsection. The hearing officer shall consider and give weight to all of the teacher's evaluations written pursuant to Article 24A that are relevant to the issues in the hearing.

Each party shall have no more than 3 days to present its case, unless extended by the hearing officer to enable a party to present adequate evidence and testimony, including due to the other party's cross-examination of the party's witnesses, for good cause or by mutual agreement of the parties. The State Board of Education shall define in rules the meaning of "day" for such purposes. All testimony at the hearing shall be taken under oath administered by the hearing officer. The hearing officer shall cause a record of the proceedings to be kept and shall employ a competent reporter to take stenographic or stenotype notes of all the testimony. The costs of the reporter's attendance and services at the hearing shall be paid by the party or parties who are responsible for paying the fees and costs of the hearing officer. Either party desiring a transcript of the hearing shall pay for the cost thereof. Any post-hearing briefs

must be submitted by the parties by no later than 21 days after a party's receipt of the transcript of the hearing, unless extended by the hearing officer for good cause or by mutual agreement of the parties.

(6.5) In the case of charges involving any witness who is or was at the time of the alleged conduct a student or a person under the age of 18, the hearing officer shall make accommodations to protect a witness from being intimidated, traumatized, or re-traumatized. No alleged victim or other witness who is or was at the time of the alleged conduct a student or under the age of 18 may be compelled to testify in the physical or visual presence of a teacher or other witness. If such a witness invokes this right, then the hearing officer must provide an accommodation consistent with the invoked right and use a procedure by which each party may hear such witness's testimony. Accommodations may include, but are not limited to: (i) testimony made via a telecommunication device in a location other than the hearing room and outside the physical or visual presence of the teacher and other hearing participants, but accessible to the teacher via a telecommunication device, (ii) testimony made in the hearing room but outside the physical presence of the teacher and accessible to the teacher via a telecommunication device, (iii) non-public testimony, (iv) testimony made via videoconference with the cameras and

microphones of the teacher turned off, or (v) pre-recorded testimony, including, but not limited to, a recording of a forensic interview conducted at an accredited Children's Advocacy Center. With all accommodations, the hearing officer shall give such testimony the same consideration as if the witness testified without the accommodation. The teacher may not directly, or through a representative, question a witness called by the school board who is or was a student or under 18 years of age at the time of the alleged conduct. The hearing officer must permit the teacher to submit all relevant questions and follow-up questions for such a witness to have the questions posed by the hearing officer. All questions must exclude evidence of the witness' sexual behavior or predisposition, unless the evidence is offered to prove that someone other than the teacher subject to the dismissal hearing engaged in the charge at issue.

(7) The hearing officer shall, within 30 days from the conclusion of the hearing or closure of the record, whichever is later, make a decision as to whether or not the teacher shall be dismissed pursuant to Article 24A of this Code or report to the school board findings of fact and a recommendation as to whether or not the teacher shall be dismissed for cause and shall give a copy of the decision or findings of fact and recommendation to both the teacher and the school board. If a hearing officer

fails without good cause, specifically provided in writing to both parties and the State Board of Education, to render a decision or findings of fact and recommendation within 30 days after the hearing is concluded or the record is closed, whichever is later, the parties may mutually agree to select a hearing officer pursuant to the alternative procedure, as provided in this Section, to rehear the charges heard by the hearing officer who failed to render a decision or findings of fact and recommendation or to review the record and render a decision. If any hearing officer fails without good cause, specifically provided in writing to both parties and the State Board of Education, to render a decision or findings of fact and recommendation within 30 days after the hearing is concluded or the record is closed, whichever is later, or if any hearing officer fails to make an accommodation as described in paragraph (6.5), the hearing officer shall be removed from the master list of hearing officers maintained by the State Board of Education for not more than 24 months. The parties and the State Board of Education may also take such other actions as it deems appropriate, including recovering, reducing, or withholding any fees paid or to be paid to the hearing officer. If any hearing officer repeats such failure, he or she must be permanently removed from the master list maintained by the State Board of Education and may not be

selected by parties through the alternative selection process under this paragraph (7) or paragraph (4) of this subsection (d). The board shall not lose jurisdiction to discharge a teacher if the hearing officer fails to render a decision or findings of fact and recommendation within the time specified in this Section. If the decision of the hearing officer for dismissal pursuant to Article 24A of this Code or of the school board for dismissal for cause is in favor of the teacher, then the hearing officer or school board shall order reinstatement to the same or substantially equivalent position and shall determine the amount for which the school board is liable, including, but not limited to, loss of income and benefits.

(8) The school board, within 45 days after receipt of the hearing officer's findings of fact and recommendation as to whether (i) the conduct at issue occurred, (ii) the conduct that did occur was remediable, and (iii) the proposed dismissal should be sustained, shall issue a written order as to whether the teacher must be retained or dismissed for cause from its employ. The school board's written order shall incorporate the hearing officer's findings of fact, except that the school board may modify or supplement the findings of fact if, in its opinion, the findings of fact are against the manifest weight of the evidence.

If the school board dismisses the teacher

notwithstanding the hearing officer's findings of fact and recommendation, the school board shall make a conclusion in its written order, giving its reasons therefor, and such conclusion and reasons must be included in its written order. The failure of the school board to strictly adhere to the timelines contained in this Section shall not render it without jurisdiction to dismiss the teacher. The school board shall not lose jurisdiction to discharge the teacher for cause if the hearing officer fails to render a recommendation within the time specified in this Section. The decision of the school board is final, unless reviewed as provided in paragraph (9) of this subsection (d).

If the school board retains the teacher, the school board shall enter a written order stating the amount of back pay and lost benefits, less mitigation, to be paid to the teacher, within 45 days after its retention order. Should the teacher object to the amount of the back pay and lost benefits or amount mitigated, the teacher shall give written objections to the amount within 21 days. If the parties fail to reach resolution within 7 days, the dispute shall be referred to the hearing officer, who shall consider the school board's written order and teacher's written objection and determine the amount to which the school board is liable. The costs of the hearing officer's review and determination must be paid by the

board.

(9) The decision of the hearing officer pursuant to Article 24A of this Code or of the school board's decision to dismiss for cause is final unless reviewed as provided in Section 24-16 of this Code. If the school board's decision to dismiss for cause is contrary to the hearing officer's recommendation, the court on review shall give consideration to the school board's decision and its supplemental findings of fact, if applicable, and the hearing officer's findings of fact and recommendation in making its decision. In the event such review is instituted, the school board shall be responsible for preparing and filing the record of proceedings, and such costs associated therewith must be divided equally between the parties.

(10) If a decision of the hearing officer for dismissal pursuant to Article 24A of this Code or of the school board for dismissal for cause is adjudicated upon review or appeal in favor of the teacher, then the trial court shall order reinstatement and shall remand the matter to the school board with direction for entry of an order setting the amount of back pay, lost benefits, and costs, less mitigation. The teacher may challenge the school board's order setting the amount of back pay, lost benefits, and costs, less mitigation, through an expedited arbitration procedure, with the costs of the arbitrator

borne by the school board.

Any teacher who is reinstated by any hearing or adjudication brought under this Section shall be assigned by the board to a position substantially similar to the one which that teacher held prior to that teacher's suspension or dismissal.

(11) Subject to any later effective date referenced in this Section for a specific aspect of the dismissal process, the changes made by Public Act 97-8 shall apply to dismissals instituted on or after September 1, 2011. Any dismissal instituted prior to September 1, 2011 must be carried out in accordance with the requirements of this Section prior to amendment by Public Act 97-8.

(e) Nothing contained in Public Act 98-648 repeals, supersedes, invalidates, or nullifies final decisions in lawsuits pending on July 1, 2014 (the effective date of Public Act 98-648) in Illinois courts involving the interpretation of Public Act 97-8.

(Source: P.A. 102-708, eff. 4-22-22; 103-354, eff. 1-1-24; 103-398, eff. 1-1-24; 103-500, eff. 8-4-23; 103-605, eff. 7-1-24.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect upon becoming law.