

STATE OF WISCONSIN  
BEFORE THE WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION

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BROOKE STEINGRAEBER, Appellant,

vs.

STATE OF WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS, Respondent.

Case ID: 1.0877

Case Type: PA

DECISION NO. 41432

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Appearances:

Steve Parenteau, 606 Brittingham Ct., Portage, Wisconsin, appearing on behalf of Brooke Steingraeber.

David Makovec, Attorney, Department of Administration, 101 E. Wilson Street, 10th Floor, P.O. Box 7864, Madison, Wisconsin, appearing on behalf of the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

**DECISION AND ORDER**

On January 15, 2026, Brooke Steingraeber filed an appeal with the Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission asserting that she had been suspended for five days without just cause by the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections. The appeal was assigned to Commission Examiner Katherine Scott Lisiecki.

A hearing was held via Zoom on March 24, 2026, by Examiner Lisiecki. The parties made oral closing arguments at the end of the hearing. On April 15, 2026, Examiner Lisiecki issued a Proposed Decision and Order affirming the five day suspension of Steingraeber by the DOC. No objections to the Proposed Decision were filed by the parties, and the matter became ripe for Commission consideration on April 21, 2026.

Being fully advised on the premises and having considered the matter, the Commission makes and issues the following:

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

1. Brooke Steingraeber (Steingraeber) is employed by the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), as a correctional officer at Columbia Correctional Institution (CCI). She had permanent status in class when she was suspended.

2. In 2025, Steingraeber was tardy on three occasions.
3. Following an investigation, the DOC suspended Steingraeber for five days for unexcused or excessive tardiness.

Based on the above and foregoing Findings of Fact, the Commission makes and issues the following:

### **CONCLUSIONS OF LAW**

1. The Wisconsin Employment Relations Commission has jurisdiction over this appeal pursuant to Wis. Stat. § 230.44 (1)(c).
2. The State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections had just cause within the meaning of Wis. Stat. § 230.34(1)(a) to suspend Brooke Steingraeber for five days.

Based on the above and foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, the Commission makes and issues the following:

### **ORDER**

The five-day suspension of Brooke Steingraeber by the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections is affirmed.

Issued at Madison, Wisconsin, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026.

**WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**Electronically signed by Peter G. Davis**

Peter G. Davis, Chairman

**MEMORANDUM ACCOMPANYING DECISION AND ORDER**

Section 230.34(1)(a), Stats., provides in pertinent part the following as to certain employees of the State of Wisconsin:

An employee with permanent status in class ... may be removed, suspended without pay, discharged, reduced in base pay or demoted only for just cause.

Section 230.44(1)(c), Stats., provides that a State employee with permanent status in class:

may appeal a demotion, layoff, suspension, discharge or reduction in base pay to the commission ... if the appeal alleges that the decision was not based on just cause.

Brooke Steingraeber had permanent status in class at the time of her suspension and her appeal alleges that the suspension was not based on just cause.

The State has the burden of proof to establish that Steingraeber was guilty of the alleged misconduct and that the misconduct constitutes just cause for the discipline imposed. *Reinke v. Personnel Bd.*, 53 Wis.2d 123 (1971); *Safransky v. Personnel Bd.*, 62 Wis.2d 464 (1974).

Brooke Steingraeber (Steingraeber) is employed by the State of Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC), as a correctional officer at Columbia Correctional Institution (CCI). She was tardy on four dates in 2025: January 22, July 17, July 23, and September 13. DOC attendance policy permits employees to have two tardies each calendar year. *See* Exhibit R-7, pg. 31.

Steingraeber argues that one instance shouldn't count against her, because her abusive former partner prevented her from leaving the house. She is correct that this instance should not count against her, because it was a situation outside her control. However, Steingraeber still had three other instances of tardiness.

Steingraeber argues that she was only a few minutes late on two of these occasions, and that she had arrived at the institution on time but had not yet arrived at her post. However, CCI Warden Kevin Garceau testified about how important it is that employees arrive at the institution with enough time to go through security and arrive at their posts on time. Garceau explained that tardiness disrupts staffing and affects everyone in the institution.

Steingraeber argues that the investigation took too long. However, Lieutenant Bryce Arnold testified that the investigation took longer than expected because of his scheduling conflicts with Steingraeber: he only works on weekdays, whereas she only works on weekends. He testified that he had the investigation reassigned so it could be conducted in a more timely manner.

Turning to the issue of whether there was just cause for a five-day suspension, the record reflects that Steingraeber had a three-day suspension on her record at the time of this suspension.

A five-day suspension is the next step in the standard disciplinary progression and the Commission is satisfied that the suspension imposed satisfies the just cause standard.

Issued at the City of Madison, Wisconsin, this 7<sup>th</sup> day of May 2026.

**WISCONSIN EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS COMMISSION**

**Electronically signed by Peter G. Davis**

Peter G. Davis, Chairman