

whats wrong with mde records

Data-access request and MDE's added identity/relationship-verification gate

Release-review packet generated from preserved MDE communications and source renders. Family PII and selected sensitive school-location terms were redacted from derivative pages using the packet redaction control list. Red boxes indicate packet-applied redactions; black boxes, if present, are pre-existing source or District redactions. Native email/thread renders are surfaced for manual disposition and should not be treated as final public-release copies until reviewed.

Generated	2026-06-25
Redaction controls	38 packet terms and OCR/source variants
Redaction legend	
Disposition	RELEASE_REVIEW - manual native-render review still required

Packet Contents

B-01	June 16 data-access request attachment: closed complaint processing records request attachment PDF; standard review	p. 3
B-02	Gmail thread render: request, acknowledgement, verification gate, clarification, and response native Gmail/thread render; manual disposition	p. 8

B-01

June 16 data-access request attachment: closed complaint processing records

Source type	request attachment PDF
Source file	communications/request/2026-06-16-mde-closed-complaints-processing-subject-emails-access.pdf
Why it matters	Shows the actual records request: existing processing, routing, review, closure, reconsideration, and non-response records for the closed complaint files.
Redaction legend	Red boxes = packet-applied redactions; black boxes = pre-existing source/District redactions.
Redactions applied	41
Manual disposition	No native-render disposition flag

Data Access Request

MDE closed complaint processing records and subject-identifying communications

Request type	Data Access Request
Submitted	June 16, 2026
Requester	[REDACTED] data subject and parent of minor data subject [REDACTED]
Recipient	Minnesota Department of Education, Responsible Authority / Data Practices Designee
Scope	MDE closed complaint files 26-226C and 26-240C; processing records and subject-identifying communications
Response watch	MGDPA access: immediate if possible, or within ten business days excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays; FERPA/IDEA outer limit where applicable: 45 calendar days

This cover page is an index aid. The request body controls the scope, authorities invoked, and requested action.

Data Access Request: MDE Closed Complaint Processing Records and Subject-Identifying Communications

Submitted date: 2026-06-16

Requester: [REDACTED] data subject and parent of minor data subject [REDACTED]

Recipient: Minnesota Department of Education, Responsible Authority / Data Practices Designee

Request

Dear Responsible Authority / Data Practices Designee:

This is a formal data access request under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, Minnesota Statutes chapter 13, including sections 13.03 and 13.04, subdivision 3. To the extent the requested records are education records directly related to [REDACTED] and maintained by MDE as a State educational agency or by a party acting for MDE, this request also invokes FERPA, 20 U.S.C. section 1232g and 34 C.F.R. part 99. To the extent the requested records were collected, maintained, or used under IDEA Part B, this request also invokes 34 C.F.R. 300.613.

I am requesting access as a member of the public, as a data subject, and as the parent of the minor student/data subject [REDACTED]. This request seeks existing government data and education records. It does not ask MDE to create new data or answer interrogatories.

Please provide access to and electronic copies of all government data and education records documenting MDE's receipt, routing, assignment, review, processing, disposition, closure, response decisions, non-response decisions, or maintained basis for action or inaction regarding the following closed MDE special education complaint files and related communications:

1. Special Education Complaint 26-226C, submitted May 4, 2026;
2. MDE's May 4, 2026 intake/opening communications for Complaint 26-226C;
3. MDE's May 8 and May 12, 2026 communications concerning Complaint 26-226C, including any request for clarification, discussion of whether [REDACTED] was a special education student or had an IEP, or discussion of MDE's special education complaint authority;
4. my May 12 and May 13, 2026 supplemental clarification / written clarification concerning Complaint 26-226C;
5. MDE's May 15, 2026 dismissal / closure of Complaint 26-226C, including any record identifying the basis for closing the file and any record connecting that closure to MDE's direction or suggestion that I file a separate Child Find complaint;
6. Special Education Complaint 26-240C, submitted May 18, 2026 after the closure of Complaint 26-226C;
7. MDE's May 18, May 22, and June 1, 2026 intake, protected-message, review, assignment, or screening communications concerning Complaint 26-240C;
8. my June 1, 2026 source-based response concerning the [REDACTED] parentally placed nonpublic Child Find issue;
9. MDE's June 2, 2026 closure letter for Complaint 26-240C;
10. my June 2, 2026 reconsideration / amended-decision request;
11. my June 2, 2026 Minn. Stat. section 13.04 data challenge concerning MDE's maintained closure records;
12. MDE Data Practices' June 3, 2026 acknowledgment of that data challenge;
13. my June 6, 2026 follow-up on the pending reconsideration / amended-decision request; and

14. my June 16, 2026 final written-position request.

This request includes, without limitation, the following existing records, if maintained:

- intake records, routing records, assignment records, status records, tracking entries, review notes, processing notes, disposition notes, closure notes, and records identifying who reviewed or approved any action or non-action for either closed complaint file;
- emails, attachments, calendar entries, Teams/chat messages, memoranda, notes, drafts, comments, or other communications sent, received, created, or maintained by MDE staff, supervisors, legal staff, data-practices staff, dispute-resolution staff, or decision-makers involved in Complaint 26-226C, Complaint 26-240C, or the related clarification/reconsideration/data-challenge/follow-up requests;
- all emails or communications to, from, or copied to any MDE person who reviewed, recommended, approved, rejected, closed, routed, or declined to respond to either complaint or any related request listed above, where [REDACTED] Complaint 26-226C, Complaint 26-240C, the [REDACTED] nonpublic Child Find issue, PLSAS, Prior Lake-Savage Area Schools, [REDACTED] the May 15 dismissal letter, the June 2 closure letter, the reconsideration / amended-decision request, the data challenge, the June 6 follow-up, or the June 16 final written-position request is the subject or can be identified as the subject;
- records identifying the basis for MDE's May 15 closure rationale for Complaint 26-226C, including records identifying whether MDE treated the original complaint or supplemental clarification as outside MDE authority, insufficiently pleaded, outside special education law, not an IDEA/special-education issue, not involving a student with an IEP, not involving a special education student, requiring a separate Child Find complaint, or otherwise not reviewable;
- records identifying the basis for MDE's June 2 closure rationale for Complaint 26-240C, including records identifying whether MDE treated the [REDACTED] parentally placed nonpublic Child Find issue as not pleaded, untimely, outside MDE authority, no-duty, meritless, already decided, or otherwise not reviewable;
- records identifying any decision, recommendation, instruction, or maintained position not to issue a substantive response, amended closure decision, reconsideration denial, or written acknowledgment in either closed complaint lane;
- search, custodian, routing, assignment, review, privilege, withholding, redaction, and segregation records created or used in processing any responsive records for this request or the related June 2 data challenge.

For clarity, this request includes internal emails and internal communications if they are existing government data and if [REDACTED] Complaint 26-226C, Complaint 26-240C, or the related request/response history is the subject. I understand that MDE may withhold or redact data that are attorney data, privileged, confidential, protected nonpublic, or otherwise not accessible under a specific statute or federal-law provision. I am not asking MDE to waive any valid privilege or disclose other students' private data. I am asking MDE to produce all responsive public or private data accessible to me and to identify the specific legal basis for any withholding or redaction.

If MDE contends that no responsive data exists for any category above, please state that no responsive data exists for that category. If MDE withholds or redacts any responsive data, please identify the withheld or redacted item or category, the responsible custodian if known, and the specific statutory section, temporary classification, court rule, privilege, or federal-law provision relied upon. Please produce all reasonably segregable responsive data.

Please provide records electronically by email or secure download link. If any copy fee will be charged, please provide an itemized estimate before incurring the cost. I request inspection access without charge where available under Minnesota Statutes section 13.03 or 13.04.

Under Minnesota Statutes section 13.04, subdivision 3, MDE should comply immediately if possible, or within ten days of the request, excluding Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays. FERPA and IDEA also require access within a reasonable period and no later than 45 calendar days where applicable.

Nothing in this request is intended to toll, extend, waive, or delay any appeal period, data-challenge deadline, reconsideration position, due-process option, or other remedy. This is a separate request for existing government data

and education records.

Respectfully,



B-02

Gmail thread render: request, acknowledgement, verification gate, clarification, and response

Source type	native Gmail/thread render
Source file	communications/evidence/mde_communications_2026-06-25/1868891304110314602_original.pdf
Why it matters	Shows the sequence after the request: acknowledgement, then notarized identity and parent-relationship documentation requirements before private-data production, plus the request for clarification about public/non-private processing.
Redaction legend	Red boxes = packet-applied redactions; black boxes = pre-existing source/District redactions.
Redactions applied	89
Manual disposition	YES - native/protected render requires human release review

Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications

7 messages

[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> Tue, Jun 16, 2026 at 11:51 AM
To: mde.datapractices@state.mn.us, mde.commissioner@state.mn.us
Cc: MDE.Dispute-Resolution@state.mn.us, karen.reiter@state.mn.us, sage.vanvoorhis@state.mn.us, sara.winter@state.mn.us

Dear Responsible Authority / Data Practices Designee:

Please treat the attached PDF as a formal data access request under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act, and under FERPA/IDEA to the extent the requested records are education records or records collected, maintained, or used under IDEA Part B.

I am requesting existing MDE records regarding the processing, routing, review, closure, reconsideration, data-challenge handling, follow-up handling, and response/non-response decisions for both closed MDE special education complaint files: Complaint 26-226C and Complaint 26-240C. This includes emails and internal communications to or from the people who reviewed, rejected, closed, routed, or declined to respond to those complaints or related requests, where I, my child, either complaint number, the [REDACTED] nonpublic Child Find issue, or the related request/response history is the subject.

Respectfully,

[REDACTED]

 **2026-06-16-mde-closed-complaints-processing-subject-emails-access.pdf**
10K

[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]> Thu, Jun 18, 2026 at 11:34 AM
To: mde.datapractices@state.mn.us, mde.commissioner@state.mn.us
Cc: MDE.Dispute-Resolution@state.mn.us, karen.reiter@state.mn.us, sage.vanvoorhis@state.mn.us, sara.winter@state.mn.us

Hello,

I am following up to request acknowledgement of my June 16, 2026 data access request titled `Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications`, sent with the attached PDF `2026-06-16-mde-closed-complaints-processing-subject-emails-access.pdf`.

Please confirm receipt and identify the person, office, or queue assigned to process the request. If MDE contends the request was not received, the attachment was inaccessible, or the request should be directed somewhere else, please let me know so I can cure that immediately.

This is only a request for receipt and processing acknowledgement and does not alter or waive any applicable response deadline.

Thank you,

[REDACTED]

[Quoted text hidden]

MDE, DataPractices (MDE) <mde.datapractices@state.mn.us> Thu, Jun 18, 2026 at 12:16 PM
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>, "MDE, DataPractices (MDE)" <mde.datapractices@state.mn.us>, "MDE, Commissioner (MDE)" <mde.commissioner@state.mn.us>
Cc: "MDE, Compliance-Assistance (MDE)" <MDE.Dispute-Resolution@state.mn.us>, "Reiter, Karen (MDE)" Winter, Sara (MDE)"

Thank you for contacting the Minnesota Department of Education.

We have received your data request and are processing it. We will respond to you as soon as reasonably possible.

Sarah Grace Zabel
Legal Process Coordinator
651-582-8542 | sarah.zabel@state.mn.us

Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413
education.mn.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2026 11:35 AM
To: MDE, DataPractices (MDE) <mde.datapractices@state.mn.us>; MDE, Commissioner (MDE) <mde.commissioner@state.mn.us>
Cc: MDE, Compliance-Assistance (MDE) <MDE.Dispute-Resolution@state.mn.us>; Reiter, Karen (MDE) <karen.reiter@state.mn.us>; VanVoorhis, Sage (MDE) <sage.vanvoorhis@state.mn.us>; Winter, Sara (MDE) <sara.winter@state.mn.us>
Subject: RE: Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications

[You don't often get email from [REDACTED] Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/LearnAboutSenderIdentification>]

This message may be from an external email source.
Do not select links or open attachments unless verified. Report all suspicious emails to Minnesota IT Services Security Operations Center.


[Quoted text hidden]

MDE, DataPractices (MDE) <mde.datapractices@state.mn.us>
To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

Thu, Jun 18, 2026 at 2:01 PM

In order for us to be able to provide private data, we will need you to fill out this attached Verification of Identity Form, including getting it signed in front of a Notary Public and providing a photo of a birth certificate or equivalent legal document establishing your relationship to [REDACTED]

[Quoted text hidden]

 **Verification of Identity Form.pdf**
105K

[REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
To: mde.datapractices@state.mn.us

Thu, Jun 18, 2026 at 6:40 PM

Ms. Zabel,

Thank you. I understand that Minn. Stat. 13.05 requires MDE to maintain appropriate safeguards before releasing private data, and I am not asking MDE to disregard those safeguards.

I will try to take time away from work tomorrow, Friday, June 19, 2026, to begin getting the requested identity information notarized. As a practical matter, though, gathering the necessary relationship documentation and appearing before a notary will likely not be possible until this weekend. I want to note that this is a meaningful burden on access, especially where the requested records concern complaints submitted from this email address and where this email address is printed on the complaint materials themselves.

simpl=msg-f.186817310132248716... 2/7

The identity-verification request would seem less unusual to me if MDE had acknowledged or answered my simple, standard, and straightforward question about what date range MDE used in making its complaint determination. That question remains important to understanding the file and the basis for MDE's handling of the complaint.

Please also clarify what MDE will accept as proof of parent relationship. For example, would my child's enrollment files demonstrate that relationship, and if so, are those records something MDE already has access to or can verify through the complaint file or related education records?

Finally, please confirm whether MDE is treating the verification issue as applying only to private data, and whether MDE will continue processing and producing any public or otherwise non-private responsive data while I work to complete the notarized verification step.

Thank you,

On Thu, 18 Jun 2026 19:01:08 +0000, "MDE, DataPractices (MDE)" mde.datapractices@state.mn.us wrote:

In order for us to be able to provide private data, we will need you to fill out this attached Verification of Identity Form, including getting it signed in front of a Notary Public and providing a photo of a birth certificate or equivalent legal document establishing your relationship to [REDACTED]

Sarah Grace Zabel
Legal Process Coordinator
651-582-8542 | sarah.zabel@state.mn.us

Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413
education.mn.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: MDE, DataPractices (MDE)
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2026 12:17 PM
To: [REDACTED] MDE, DataPractices (MDE) mde.datapractices@state.mn.us;
MDE, Commissioner (MDE) mde.commissioner@state.mn.us
Cc: MDE, Compliance-Assistance (MDE) MDE.Dispute-Resolution@state.mn.us; Reiter, Karen (MDE) karen.reiter@state.mn.us; VanVoorhis, Sage (MDE) sage.vanvoorhis@state.mn.us; Winter, Sara (MDE) sara.winter@state.mn.us
Subject: RE: Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications

Thank you for contacting the Minnesota Department of Education.

We have received your data request and are processing it. We will respond to you as soon as reasonably possible.

Sarah Grace Zabel
Legal Process Coordinator
651-582-8542 | sarah.zabel@state.mn.us

Minnesota Department of Education
400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413 education.mn.gov

-----Original Message-----

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2026 11:35 AM
To: MDE, DataPractices (MDE) mde.datapractices@state.mn.us; MDE, Commissioner (MDE) mde.commissioner@state.mn.us
Cc: MDE, Compliance-Assistance (MDE) MDE.Dispute-Resolution@state.mn.us; Reiter, Karen (MDE) karen.reiter@state.mn.us; VanVoorhis, Sage (MDE) sage.vanvoorhis@state.mn.us; Winter, Sara (MDE) sara.winter@state.mn.us
Subject: RE: Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications

[You don't often get email from [REDACTED] Learn why this is important at <https://aka.ms/>

This message may be from an external email source.
Do not select links or open attachments unless verified. Report all suspicious emails to Minnesota IT Services Security Operations Center.

Hello,

I am following up to request acknowledgement of my June 16, 2026 data access request titled Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications, sent with the attached PDF 2026-06-16-mde-closed-complaints-processing-subject-emails-access.pdf.

[Quoted text hidden]

MDE, DataPractices (MDE) <mde.datapractices@state.mn.us>

Wed, Jun 24, 2026 at 9:28 AM

To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

When processing a data request, MDE's Data Practices team is tasked with determining whether requested data is public or private data under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13, and providing the data to a requester pursuant to their right to receive either public or private data on the requested topic. Data Practices does not provide answers to substantive questions about the content of requested data but will work with the content area holding the requested data to provide information consistent with your data request in a timely manner.

Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) require disclosure of data to the individual who is the subject of the data. The parent or guardian of a minor is requesting data on individuals on behalf of their minor children, so verification of identity as parent or guardian is required prior to releasing this information (just as verification of identity would be required before a government entity could release data on an adult). In contrast, State special education complaints may be filed by any individual or organization, regardless of relationship to the student, and, by law, does not require a verification of identity. Enrollment files are not adequate for establishing the relationship for these purposes. Appropriate documents are: a copy of the minor's birth certificate, a court order relating to divorce, separation, custody or foster care; a foster care contract; an affidavit of parentage; or documentation of formal or informal appointment as guardian, such as court order(s) or a valid power of attorney.

We are working on gathering all the responsive data. Once we have that gathered and reviewed, we can, if necessary, produce only the public data response to your request, if we haven't received verification of identity yet.

Sarah Grace Zabel

Legal Process Coordinator

651-582-8542 | sarah.zabel@state.mn.us

Minnesota Department of Education

400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413

education.mn.gov



To: mde.datapractices@state.mn.us

Ms. Zabel,

Thank you for the update, and for MDE's efforts to ensure that the email address that submitted the complaint, requested the complaint-processing data, and was listed in the complaint materials as the respond-to address is in fact associated with the person to whom complaint-related information may be sent.

I am surprised that MDE does not consider enrollment records sufficient to demonstrate parent relationship, particularly where the underlying complaint records and related education records should identify the parent/student relationship. Is MDE concerned that the enrollment or education records it has available may contain the same kind of parent-relationship or record-accuracy problems we have identified in ISD 719's maintained files?

In any event, I understand MDE's position. I am trying to schedule time away from work to obtain a stamped/certified copy of my child's birth certificate, since that can only be done during normal weekday business hours. I will provide the requested documentation to MDE no later than July 6, 2026.

Thank you,

On Wed, 24 Jun 2026 14:28:54 +0000, "MDE, DataPractices (MDE)" <mde.datapractices@state.mn.us> wrote:

- > When processing a data request, MDE's Data Practices team is tasked with determining whether requested data is public or private data under Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13, and providing the data to a requester pursuant to their right to
- > receive either public or private data on the requested topic. Data Practices does not provide answers to substantive questions about the content of requested data but will work with the content area holding the requested data to provide information consistent
- > with your data request in a timely manner.
- >
- > Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 13 and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) require disclosure of data to the individual who is the subject of the data. The parent or guardian of a minor is requesting data on individuals on
- > behalf of their minor children, so verification of identity as parent or guardian is required prior to releasing this information (just as verification of identity would be required before a government entity could release data on an adult). In contrast, State
- > special education complaints may be filed by any individual or organization, regardless of relationship to the student, and, by law, does not require a verification of identity. Enrollment files are not adequate for establishing the relationship for these
- > purposes. Appropriate documents are: a copy of the minor's birth certificate, a court order relating to divorce, separation, custody or foster care; a foster care contract; an affidavit of parentage; or documentation of formal or informal appointment as guardian,
- > such as court order(s) or a valid power of attorney.
- >
- > We are working on gathering all the responsive data. Once we have that gathered and reviewed, we can, if necessary, produce only the public data response to your request, if we haven't received verification of identity yet.
- >
- > Sarah Grace Zabel
- >
- > Legal Process Coordinator
- >
- > 651-582-8542 |
- > [sarah.zabel@state.mn.us](mailto:firstname.lastname@state.mn.us)
- >
- > Minnesota Department of Education
- >
- > 400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413
- >
- > education.mn.gov
- >
- > From: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>
- >
- > Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2026 6:40 PM

>
> Subject: RE: Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications
>
> Ms. Zabel,
>
> Thank you. I understand that Minn. Stat. 13.05 requires MDE to maintain appropriate safeguards before releasing private data, and I am not asking MDE to disregard those safeguards.
>
> I will try to take time away from work tomorrow, Friday, June 19, 2026, to begin getting the requested identity information notarized. As a practical matter, though, gathering the necessary relationship documentation and appearing before a notary will likely
> not be possible until this weekend. I want to note that this is a meaningful burden on access, especially where the requested records concern complaints submitted from this email address and where this email address is printed on the complaint materials themselves.
>
> The identity-verification request would seem less unusual to me if MDE had acknowledged or answered my simple, standard, and straightforward question about what date range MDE used in making its complaint determination. That question remains important to
> understanding the file and the basis for MDE's handling of the complaint.
>
> Please also clarify what MDE will accept as proof of parent relationship. For example, would my child's enrollment files demonstrate that relationship, and if so, are those records something MDE already has access to or can verify through the complaint file
> or related education records?
>
> Finally, please confirm whether MDE is treating the verification issue as applying only to private data, and whether MDE will continue processing and producing any public or otherwise non-private responsive data while I work to complete the notarized verification
> step.
>
> Thank you,
>
> [REDACTED]
>
> On Thu, 18 Jun 2026 19:01:08 +0000, "MDE, DataPractices (MDE)" mde.datapractices@state.mn.us wrote:
>
> In order for us to be able to provide private data, we will need you to fill out this attached Verification of Identity Form, including getting it signed in front of a Notary Public and providing a photo of a birth certificate or equivalent legal document
> establishing your relationship to [REDACTED]
>
> Sarah Grace Zabel
>
> Legal Process Coordinator
>
> 651-582-8542, |, sarah.zabel@state.mn.us
>
> Minnesota Department of Education
>
> 400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413
>
> [education.mn.gov](<http://education.mn.gov>)
>
> -----Original Message-----
>
> From: MDE, DataPractices (MDE)
>
> Sent: Thursday, June 18, 2026 12:17 PM
>
> To: [REDACTED] MDE, DataPractices (MDE)
> mde.datapractices@state.mn.us; MDE, Commissioner (MDE)
> mde.commissioner@state.mn.us

, Karen (MDE)

simpl=msg-f:186817310132248716... 6/7

karen.reiter@state.mn.us; VanVoorhis, Sage (MDE) sage.vanvoorhis@state.mn.us; Winter, Sara (MDE) sara.winter@state.mn.us

>
> Subject: RE: Data Access Request - MDE Complaints 26-226C and 26-240C processing records and subject-identifying communications
>
> Thank you for contacting the Minnesota Department of Education.
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> We have received your data request and are processing it. We will respond to you as soon as reasonably possible.
>
> Sarah Grace Zabel
>
> Legal Process Coordinator
>
> 651-582-8542, |Ã, sarah.zabel@state.mn.us
>
> Minnesota Department of Education
>
> 400 NE Stinson Blvd., Minneapolis, MN 55413 [education.mn.gov](<http://education.mn.gov>)
[Quoted text hidden]