



Homeland Security: Former top Tennessee vaccine official paid for muzzle sent before firing

Mariah Timms, Nashville Tennessean 1 hr ago

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Tennessee's former top vaccination official, who was fired in July, may have sent herself a dog muzzle, and there's no evidence it was intended to threaten her, a new state investigation found.



© Stephanie Amador / The Tennessean Dr. Michelle Fiscus holds up the muzzle at her home in Franklin, Tenn., Wednesday, July 14, 2021. The former top vaccination official was fired from the Tennessee Department of Health. "Whoever sent that must not know me very well. That's for a beagle, but I'm a pit bull," Fiscus said.

A new investigative report from the Tennessee Department of Safety and Homeland Security obtained by The Tennessean indicates with Dr. Michelle Fiscus' own American Express credit card.

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Fiscus in July reportedly received an anonymous package containing a muzzle days before was fired from the Tennessee Department of Health, her husband Brad Fiscus told The Tennessean at the time.

Michelle Fiscus was fired from her role as the state's top vaccination official in mid-July in a move she has claimed was politically motivated.

She received a box marked with Amazon branding containing the item at her office approximately a week before she was fired, husband Brad Fiscus said.

In the box was a black dog muzzle, he said. After opening the box, he said his wife called him and he urged her to reach out to Homeland Security to investigate the sender.

At that time, he told The Tennessean that Amazon refused to release details of the account holder without a subpoena.

Homeland Security began investigating "an incident" involving Michelle Fiscus and a muzzle, spokesperson Wes Moster confirmed in a July email.

The findings in the report were first reported by Axios.

Vigil found two Amazon accounts in Michelle Fiscus' name during his investigation, the report shows.

"The first account was the account that Dr. Fiscus allowed us to review during our interview with her. The second account was the account that the muzzle was purchased on," he wrote. "The AMEX card number on both accounts" is Fiscus'.

The muzzle was sent from an account created in March this year that only has Fiscus' health department office address connected to it.

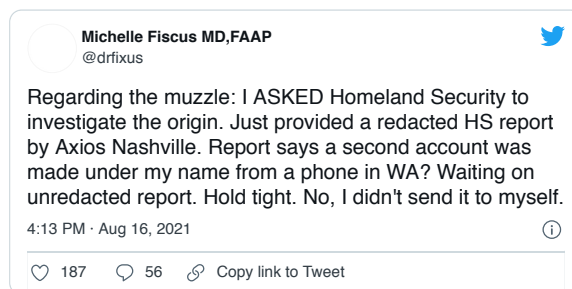
The agent also investigated emails sent to Fiscus' official health department account but determined they did not constitute a threat.

In the weeks after her firing, Fiscus slammed the state in a 1,200-word statement and accused health department leaders of allowing politics to undermine the state's coronavirus response. She says she was a scapegoat for Republican lawmakers who were displeased with efforts to vaccinate children.

Brad Fiscus recently announced he plans to step away from his role on the Williamson County School Board next month.

Requests for comment sent to both Michelle and Brad Fiscus were not immediately returned.

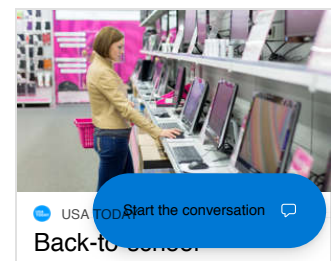
In a Tweet Monday afternoon, Michelle Fiscus denied sending the muzzle to herself. A statement sent from Brad Fiscus by text, attributed to his wife, reiterated the denial.



Reach reporter Mariah Timms at mtimms@tennessean.com or 615-259-8344 and on Twitter @MariahTimms.

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