



BACKGROUND

(April 2026)

Arancio v. Middlesex Education Association

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Angela Arancio is a special education teacher for the Middlesex Public School District and has been a member of the Middlesex Education Association for 11 years. Angela raised concerns that the interests of teachers at the district's Woodland Intermediate School, which had only recently been established as a separate school, were not adequately addressed in the collective bargaining agreement. She believes this deficiency led to insufficient class-preparation time for Woodland teachers compared with teachers at other district schools. She wanted the union to stand up for teachers at her school. But, after she refused to be quiet about this issue, filed a charge against the union over the issue, and began garnering support from other teachers, union officials retaliated against her by dissolving a bargaining-related committee she was on—despite the fact that critical contract negotiations were ongoing, she alleges in her labor board charge. Angela has now filed an unfair labor practice charge against the union, alleging illegal retaliation.

CASE LOGISTICS

Plaintiff: Angela Arancio

Defendant: Middlesex Education Association

Venue: New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission

Date Filed: November 25, 2025

BACKGROUND

- **Angela says the Middlesex Education Association (MEA) dismissed her concerns.**
 - The union was out of contract at the time, and the union Crisis Action Team that Angela was on was meant to help the union advance its bargaining position during negotiations for a new collective bargaining agreement.
 - Angela had joined the team in February 2025, after the prior contract expired in June 2024.
 - Angela says she had tried for more than a year to get the union to address class-preparation time and workload concerns affecting teachers at her school. According to Angela, union leadership promised to address her concerns but never did.
 - In May 2025, she filed a charge against the union after she said union officials dismissed her concerns at a membership meeting and tried to discredit her to her colleagues.

- **MEA officials allegedly punished Angela for speaking out.**
 - Days later, another teacher sent a text message encouraging members with concerns about union officials' conduct to contact Angela directly.
 - According to Angela's retaliation charge, that message was sent in the teacher's personal capacity, not through the Crisis Action Team, and not on behalf of the team or on union time.
 - Even so, in June 2025, the MEA's president dissolved the Crisis Action Team and said it was because the team's "platform" had been used "to solicit support for" Angela's charge, which the union president called "an inappropriate use of the team's purpose and a serious breach of its intended role."
 - Angela believes that, by dissolving the committee, union officials were punishing her for speaking up and filing her charge and were also sending a message to other members that they will not tolerate their efforts to hold the union accountable before the labor board.
 - Union officials were apparently willing to weaken their own bargaining effort rather than tolerate dissent from their members.

- **Angela alleges illegal retaliation; union doubles down.**
 - In November 2025, invoking the Employer-Employee Relations Act, Angela filed an [unfair labor practice charge](#) against the union, alleging illegal retaliation. The Act prohibits unions from retaliating against members for exercising the rights that it confers on them.
 - Angela's [retaliation charge](#) seeks an order prohibiting the union from retaliating against Angela and requiring the union to notify its members that it broke the law.
 - In a [new filing](#) last month, the union doubled down, claiming it was "factually and legally correct" to disband the Crisis Action Team because the team's "platform" was being used to solicit support for Angela's unfair labor practice charge.
 - But Angela's [retaliation charge](#) says the communications at issue happened outside the team's official work: on personal devices, through personal contacts, outside an official CAT meeting, and not on behalf of the team.
 - Angela's [retaliation charge](#) also says that, in any event, the real reason why the union disbanded the Crisis Action Team was to punish her for filing a charge against it and being supported by her fellow teachers in pursuing that charge.

QUOTATIONS

Angela Arancio:

"I brought up concerns because our newly established school was not really represented in the contract language, and that showed up in unequal workloads for Woodland teachers compared with teachers at other schools in the district. I believed my union would want to fix that. Instead, when I started asking questions about union officials following through on what they said would be done, they acted like I was the problem. They tried to discredit me, then shut down the team I was on. I believe unions do a lot of good, but members should be able to discuss issues with leadership and speak up for members' rights without being punished for it."

“What bothered me most was the message this sent to other union members: if you speak up, question leadership, or stand up for members’ rights, union officials may try to shut you down and paint you as someone who is ‘attacking’ the union. To be clear, I tried to work this out with union leadership for months before I ever filed a complaint.”

Anthony Holtzman, Fairness Center Managing Attorney:

“New Jersey law prohibits unions from retaliating against members for exercising their rights under the Employer-Employee Relations Act, including their right to file unfair labor practice charges or talk with coworkers about union leadership. Angela’s charge alleges that this type of retaliation happened here. The union tries to reframe this as misuse of the team’s ‘platform,’ but, her charge alleges, the message at issue was not an official union communication and, in any event, the real reason for the union’s conduct was to punish Angela for exercising her rights under the Act.”