REPORT OF THE AUDIT OF THE LAUREL COUNTY CLERK

For The Year Ended December 31, 2023



ALLISON BALL AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS auditor.ky.gov

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Allison Ball Auditor of Public Accounts

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable David Westerfield, Laurel County Judge/Executive The Honorable Tony Brown, Laurel County Clerk Members of the Laurel County Fiscal Court

Report on the Audit of the Financial Statement

Opinions

We have audited the accompanying Statement of Receipts, Disbursements, and Excess Fees - Regulatory Basis of the County Clerk of Laurel County, Kentucky, for the year ended December 31, 2023, and the related notes to the financial statement.

Unmodified Opinion on Regulatory Basis of Accounting

In our opinion, the accompanying financial statement presents fairly, in all material respects, the receipts, disbursements, and excess fees of the Laurel County Clerk for the year ended December 31, 2023, in accordance with the basis of accounting practices prescribed or permitted by the Commonwealth of Kentucky to demonstrate compliance with the Commonwealth of Kentucky's regulatory basis of accounting and budget laws as described in Note 1.

Adverse Opinion on U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

In our opinion, because of the significance of the matter discussed in the Basis for Adverse Opinion on U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles section of our report, the financial statement does not present fairly, in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, the financial position of the Laurel County Clerk, as of December 31, 2023, or changes in financial position or cash flows thereof for the year then ended.

Basis for Opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America (GAAS) and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* (GAS), issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, and the *Audit Program for County Fee Officials* issued by the Auditor of Public Accounts, Commonwealth of Kentucky. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statement section of our report. We are required to be independent of the Laurel County Clerk and to meet our other ethical responsibilities, in accordance with the relevant ethical requirements relating to our audit. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our audit opinions.

209 St. Clair Street Frankfort, KY 40601-1817

Basis for Opinion (Continued)

Basis for Adverse Opinion on U.S. Generally Accepted Accounting Principles

As described in Note 1 of the financial statement, the financial statement is prepared by the Laurel County Clerk on the basis of the accounting practices prescribed or permitted by the laws of Kentucky to demonstrate compliance with the Commonwealth of Kentucky's regulatory basis of accounting and budget laws, which is a basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

The effects on the financial statement of the variances between the regulatory basis of accounting described in Note 1 and accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America, although not reasonably determinable, are presumed to be material and pervasive.

Responsibilities of Management for the Financial Statement

Management is responsible for the preparation and fair presentation of this financial statement in accordance with accounting practices prescribed or permitted by the laws of Kentucky to demonstrate compliance with the Commonwealth of Kentucky's regulatory basis of accounting and budget laws. Management is also responsible for the design, implementation, and maintenance of internal control relevant to the preparation and fair presentation of a financial statement that is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statement, management is required to evaluate whether there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Laurel County Clerk's ability to continue as a going concern for twelve months beyond the financial statement date, including any currently known information that may raise substantial doubt shortly thereafter.

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statement

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statement as a whole is free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinions. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance but is not absolute assurance and therefore is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with GAAS and GAS will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. The risk of not detecting a material misstatement resulting from fraud is higher than for one resulting from error, as fraud may involve collusion, forgery, intentional omissions, misrepresentations, or the override of internal control. Misstatements are considered material if there is a substantial likelihood that, individually or in the aggregate, they would influence the judgment made by a reasonable user based on the financial statement.

In performing an audit in accordance with GAAS and GAS, we:

- Exercise professional judgment and maintain professional skepticism throughout the audit.
- Identify and assess the risks of material misstatement of the financial statement, whether due to fraud or error, and design and perform audit procedures responsive to those risks. Such procedures include examining, on a test basis, evidence regarding the amounts and disclosures in the financial statement.
- Obtain an understanding of internal control relevant to the audit in order to design audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Laurel County Clerk's internal control. Accordingly, no such opinion is expressed.
- Evaluate the appropriateness of accounting policies used and the reasonableness of significant accounting estimates made by management, as well as evaluate the overall presentation of the financial statement.
- Conclude whether, in our judgment, there are conditions or events, considered in the aggregate, that raise substantial doubt about the Laurel County Clerk's ability to continue as a going concern for a reasonable period of time.

The Honorable David Westerfield, Laurel County Judge/Executive The Honorable Tony Brown, Laurel County Clerk Members of the Laurel County Fiscal Court

Auditor's Responsibilities for the Audit of the Financial Statement (Continued)

We are required to communicate with those charged with governance regarding, among other matters, the planned scope and timing of the audit, significant audit findings, and certain internal control-related matters that we have identified during the audit.

Other Reporting Required by Government Auditing Standards

In accordance with *Government Auditing Standards*, we have also issued our report dated July 25, 2024, on our consideration of the Laurel County Clerk's internal control over financial reporting and on our tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, grant agreements, and other matters. The purpose of that report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control over financial reporting and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting or on compliance. That report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the Laurel County Clerk's internal control over financial reporting and compliance.

Respectfully submitted,

allisa Ball

Allison Ball Auditor of Public Accounts Frankfort, KY

July 25, 2024

LAUREL COUNTY TONY BROWN, COUNTY CLERK <u>STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS, DISBURSEMENTS, AND EXCESS FEES - REGULATORY BASIS</u>

For The Year Ended December 31, 2023

Receipts

State Fees For Services			
Registration of Voters	\$	279	
Election Personnel Reimbursement	4	22,302	
Delinquent Tax Commission		5,135	\$ 27,716
Fiscal Court			10,237
Licenses and Taxes:			
Motor Vehicle-			
Licenses and Transfers	2,32	29,229	
Usage Tax	10,60	05,263	
Tangible Personal Property Tax	6,57	73,865	
Notary Fees		346	
Other-			
Marriage Licenses		17,640	
Miscellaneous Licenses		343	
Deed Transfer Tax	24	47,914	
Delinquent Taxes	95	51,907	
Delinquent Tax Deposits	79	94,346	21,520,853
Fees Collected for Services:			
Recordings-			
Deeds, Easements and Contracts	~	79,253	
Real Estate Mortgages	1	18,990	
Chattel Mortgages and Financing Statements	2	18,038	
Powers of Attorney		11,655	
Storage Fees	8	80,840	
Affordable Housing Trust		45,558	
All Other Recordings	10	02,244	
Charges for Other Services-			
Candidate Filing Fees		450	
Copywork		16,157	
Postage		7,984	
Miscellaneous		11,871	693,040
Interest Earned		-	346
Total Receipts			22,252,192

LAUREL COUNTY TONY BROWN, COUNTY CLERK STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS, DISBURSEMENTS, AND EXCESS FEES - REGULATORY BASIS For The Year Ended December 31, 2023 (Continued)

Disbursements

Payments to State:		
Motor Vehicle-		
Licenses and Transfers	\$ 1,676,825	
Usage Tax	10,289,224	
Tangible Personal Property Tax	2,806,064	
Licenses, Taxes, and Fees-		
Delinquent Tax	98,071	
Legal Process Tax	52,960	
Affordable Housing Trust	45,558	\$ 14,968,702
Payments to Fiscal Court:		
Tangible Personal Property Tax	545,698	
Delinquent Tax	53,064	
Deed Transfer Tax	235,518	
Storage Fees	80,840	915,120
Payments to Other Districts:		
Tangible Personal Property Tax	2,958,955	
Delinquent Tax	512,949	3,471,904
Payments to Sheriff		74,896
Payments to County Attorney		127,678
Other Regulatory Payments:		
Delinquent Tax Deposit Refunds	755,117	
Other Refunds	87,112	842,229
Operating Disbursements:		
Personnel Services-		
Deputies' Salaries	898,913	
Employee Benefits-		
Employer's Share Social Security	79,860	
Employer's Paid Health Insurance	215,128	

LAUREL COUNTY TONY BROWN, COUNTY CLERK STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS, DISBURSEMENTS, AND EXCESS FEES - REGULATORY BASIS For The Year Ended December 31, 2023 (Continued)

Disbursements (Continued)

Operating Disbursements (Continued):				
Contracted Services-				
Accounting	\$ 4,950			
Advertising	400			
Telephone	14,271			
Materials and Supplies-				
Office Supplies	29,822			
Miscellaneous	40,691			
Uniforms	4,358			
Other Charges-				
Conventions and Travel	6,775			
Dues	1,700			
Postage	 27,149	\$ 1,324,017		
Debt Service:				
Lease Purchases		 100,048		
Total Disbursements			¢า	1,824,594
i otai Disoursements			\$ 2	1,024,394
Net Receipts				427,598
Less: Statutory Maximum				134,350
Excess Fees				293,248
Less: Expense Allowance		3,597		275,240
Training Incentive Benefit		5,359		8,956
Training incentive benefit		 5,559		0,950
Balance Due Fiscal Court at Completion of Audit*			\$	284,292

* - The county clerk presented a check to the fiscal court for excess fees of \$268,398 on April 25, 2024.

LAUREL COUNTY NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENT

December 31, 2023

Note 1. Summary of Significant Accounting Policies

A. Fund Accounting

A fee official uses a fund to report on the results of operations. A fund is a separate accounting entity with a self-balancing set of accounts. Fund accounting is designed to demonstrate legal compliance and to aid financial management by segregating transactions related to certain government functions or activities.

A fee official uses a fund for fees to account for activities for which the government desires periodic determination of the excess of receipts over disbursements to facilitate management control, accountability, and compliance with laws.

B. Basis of Accounting

KRS 64.820 directs the fiscal court to collect any amount due from the county clerk as determined by the audit. KRS 64.152 requires the county clerk to pay to the governing body of the county any fees, commissions, and other income of his or her office, including income from investments, which exceed the sum of his or her maximum salary as permitted by the Constitution and other reasonable expenses, including compensation of deputies and assistants by March 15 of each year. KRS 64.830 requires an outgoing clerk to make a final settlement with the fiscal court by March 15 immediately following the expiration of his or her term of office.

The financial statement has been prepared on a regulatory basis of accounting, which is a comprehensive basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. This basis demonstrates compliance with the laws of Kentucky and is a special purpose framework. Under this regulatory basis of accounting, receipts and disbursements are generally recognized when cash is received or disbursed, with the exception of accrual of the following items (not all-inclusive) as of December 31 that may be included in the excess fees calculation:

- Interest receivable
- Collection on accounts due from others for 2023 services
- Reimbursements for 2023 activities
- Payments due other governmental entities for December tax and fee collections and payroll
- Payments due vendors for goods or services provided in 2023

The measurement focus of a fee official's financial statement is upon current financial resources. Per KRS 64.152(2), remittance of excess fees is due to the fiscal court when the county clerk makes their final settlement.

C. Cash and Investments

KRS 66.480 authorizes the county clerk's office to invest in obligations of the United States and of its agencies and instrumentalities, obligations and contracts for future delivery or purchase of obligations backed by the full faith and credit of the United States, obligations of any corporation of the United States government, bonds or certificates of indebtedness of this state, and certificates of deposit issued by or other interest-bearing accounts of any bank or savings and loan institution which are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) or which are collateralized, to the extent uninsured, by any obligation permitted by KRS 41.240(4).

Note 2. Employee Retirement System and Other Post-Employment Benefits

The clerk's office has elected to participate, pursuant to KRS 78.530, in the County Employees Retirement System (CERS), which is administered by the Kentucky Public Pensions Authority (KPPA). This is a cost-sharing, multiple-employer, defined benefit pension plan, which covers all eligible full-time employees and provides for retirement, disability, and death benefits to plan members. Benefit contributions and provisions are established by statute.

Nonhazardous covered employees are required to contribute five percent of their salary to the plan. Nonhazardous covered employees who begin participation on or after September 1, 2008, are required to contribute six percent of their salary to be allocated as follows: five percent will go to the member's account and one percent will go to the CERS insurance fund.

In accordance with Senate Bill 2, signed by the Governor on April 4, 2013, plan members who began participating on or after January 1, 2014, were required to contribute to the Cash Balance Plan. The Cash Balance Plan is known as a hybrid plan because it has characteristics of both a defined benefit plan and a defined contribution plan. Members in the plan contribute a set percentage of their salary each month to their own accounts. Nonhazardous covered employees contribute five percent of their annual creditable compensation. Nonhazardous members also contribute one percent to the health insurance fund which is not credited to the member's account and is not refundable. The employer contributes a set percentage of the member's salary. Each month, when employer contributions are received, an employer pay credit is deposited to the member's account. A member's account is credited with a four percent employer pay credit. The employer pay credit represents a portion of the employer contribution.

Benefits fully vest on reaching five years of service for nonhazardous employees. Aspects of benefits for nonhazardous employees include retirement after 27 years of service or age 65. Nonhazardous employees who begin participation on or after September 1, 2008, must meet the rule of 87 (member's age plus years of service credit must equal 87, and the member must be a minimum of 57 years of age) or the member is age 65, with a minimum of 60 months service credit.

The county's contribution rate for nonhazardous employees was 26.79 percent for the first six months and 23.34 percent for the last six months.

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB)

A. <u>Health Insurance Coverage - Tier 1</u>

CERS provides post-retirement health care coverage as follows:

For members participating prior to July 1, 2003, years of service and respective percentages of the maximum contribution are as follows:

Years of Service	% Paid by Insurance Fund	% Paid by Member through Payroll Deduction
20 or more	100%	0%
15-19	75%	25%
10-14	50%	50%
4-9	25%	75%
Less than 4	0%	100%

LAUREL COUNTY NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENT December 31, 2023 (Continued)

Note 2. Employee Retirement System and Other Post-Employment Benefits (Continued)

Other Post-Employment Benefits (OPEB) (Continued)

A. <u>Health Insurance Coverage - Tier 1</u> (Continued)

As a result of House Bill 290 (2004 General Assembly), medical insurance benefits are calculated differently for members who began participation on or after July 1, 2003. Once members reach a minimum vesting period of ten years, non-hazardous employees whose participation began on or after July 1, 2003, they earn ten dollars per month for insurance benefits at retirement for every year of earned service without regard to a maximum dollar amount. This dollar amount is subject to adjustment annually based on the retiree cost of living adjustment, which is updated annually due to changes in the Consumer Price Index.

Benefits are covered under KRS 78.5536.

B. Health Insurance Coverage - Tier 2 and Tier 3 - Nonhazardous

Once members reach a minimum vesting period of 15 years, they earn ten dollars per month for insurance benefits at retirement for every year of earned service without regard to a maximum dollar amount. This dollar amount is subject to adjustment annually by 1.5 percent. This was established for Tier 2 members during the 2008 Special Legislative Session by House Bill 1. During the 2013 Legislative Session, Senate Bill 2 was enacted, creating Tier 3 benefits for members.

The monthly insurance benefit has been increased annually as a 1.5 percent cost of living adjustment (COLA) since July 2003 when the law changed. The annual increase is cumulative and continues to accrue after the member's retirement.

Tier 2 member benefits are covered by KRS 78.5536. Tier 3 members are not covered by the same provisions.

C. Cost of Living Adjustments - Tier 1

The 1996 General Assembly enacted an automatic cost of living adjustment (COLA) provision for all recipients of KRS benefits. During the 2008 Special Session, the General Assembly determined that each July beginning in 2009, retirees who have been receiving a retirement allowance for at least 12 months will receive an automatic COLA of 1.5 percent. The COLA is not a guaranteed benefit. If a retiree has been receiving a benefit for less than 12 months, and a COLA is provided, it will be prorated based on the number of months the recipient has been receiving a benefit.

D. Cost of Living Adjustments - Tier 2 and Tier 3

No COLA is given unless authorized by the legislature with specific criteria. To this point, no COLA has been authorized by the legislature for Tier 2 or Tier 3 members.

E. Death Benefit

If a retired member is receiving a monthly benefit based on at least 48 months of service credit, KRS will pay a \$5,000 death benefit payment to the beneficiary designated by the member specifically for this benefit. Members with multiple accounts are entitled to only one death benefit.

Note 2. Employee Retirement System and Other Post-Employment Benefits (Continued)

Kentucky Retirement Systems Annual Financial Report and Proportionate Share Audit Report

Kentucky Retirement Systems issues a publicly available annual financial report that includes financial statements and required supplementary information on CERS. This report may be obtained by writing the Kentucky Retirement Systems, 1260 Louisville Road, Frankfort, KY 40601-6124, or by telephone at (502) 564-4646.

Kentucky Retirement Systems also issues proportionate share audit reports for both total pension liability and other post-employment benefits for CERS determined by actuarial valuation as well as each participating county's proportionate share. Both the Schedules of Employer Allocations and Pension Amounts by Employer and the Schedules of Employer Allocations and OPEB Amounts by Employer reports and the related actuarial tables are available online at https://kyret.ky.gov. The complete actuarial valuation report, including all actuarial assumptions and methods, is also available on the website or can be obtained as described in the paragraph above.

Note 3. Deposits

The Laurel County Clerk maintained deposits of public funds with federally insured banking institutions as required by the Department for Local Government's (DLG) *County Budget Preparation and State Local Finance Officer Policy Manual*. The DLG Manual strongly recommends perfected pledges of securities covering all public funds except direct federal obligations and funds protected by federal insurance. In order to be perfected in the event of failure or insolvency of the depository institution, this pledge or provision of collateral should be evidenced by an agreement between the county clerk and the depository institution, signed by both parties, that is (a) in writing, (b) approved by the board of directors of the depository institution or its loan committee, which approval must be reflected in the minutes of the board or committee, and (c) an official record of the depository institution. These requirements were met.

Custodial Credit Risk - Deposits

Custodial credit risk is the risk that in the event of a depository institution failure, the county clerk's deposits may not be returned. The Laurel County Clerk does not have a deposit policy for custodial credit risk, but rather follows the requirements of the DLG *County Budget Preparation and State Local Finance Officer Policy Manual.* As of December 31, 2023, all deposits were covered by FDIC insurance or a properly executed collateral security agreement.

Note 4. Lease Agreement

The Laurel County Clerk entered into a lease agreement for the acquisition and use of computer hardware. The lease agreement requires a monthly payment of \$1,986 for 60 months to be completed on December 31, 2028. The total lease liability balance of the agreement was \$119,160 as of December 31, 2023.

Note 5. Subscription-Based Information Technology Arrangements (SBITA)

The Laurel County Clerk entered into a subscription-based information technology arrangement for accounting and recording software for bookkeeping and delinquent tax software in January 2024. The subscription terms are five years totaling \$\$226,080 and the Laurel County Clerk will receive the right-to-use subscription asset (intangible asset). The county clerk is required to make monthly payments of \$3,768 for 60 months to be completed on December 31, 2028.

LAUREL COUNTY NOTES TO FINANCIAL STATEMENT December 31, 2023 (Continued)

Note 6. Escrow Account

The Laurel County Clerk maintains an escrow account for deposits required by Kentucky Revised Statutes. As of January 1, 2023, the county clerk's escrow balance totaled \$77,840. The county clerk received deposits of \$539 and had disbursements of \$73,734, leaving a balance of \$4,645 as of December 31, 2023. The ending balance consisted of:

- The county clerk has deposited a total of \$ 3,326 of stale-dated checks into the escrow account.
- The county clerk has deposited a total of \$342 in accordance with a Notice of Allowance of Claims filed pursuant to Chapter 13 bankruptcy filed in United States Bankruptcy Court, Eastern District of Kentucky, London Division.
- The county clerk has deposited \$1,000 for two bonds to be held in escrow per court order.

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REPORT ON INTERNAL CONTROL OVER FINANCIAL REPORTING AND ON COMPLIANCE AND OTHER MATTERS BASED ON AN AUDIT OF THE FINANCIAL STATEMENT PERFORMED IN ACCORDANCE WITH *GOVERNMENT AUDITING STANDARDS* THIS PAGE LEFT BLANK INTENTIONALLY



ALLISON BALL AUDITOR OF PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Report On Internal Control Over Financial Reporting And On Compliance And Other Matters Based On An Audit Of The Financial Statement Performed In Accordance With *Government Auditing Standards*

Independent Auditor's Report

The Honorable David Westerfield, Laurel County Judge/Executive The Honorable Tony Brown, Laurel County Clerk Members of the Laurel County Fiscal Court

We have audited, in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America, the standards applicable to financial audits contained in *Government Auditing Standards* issued by the Comptroller General of the United States, and the *Audit Program for County Fee Officials* issued by the Auditor of Public Accounts, Commonwealth of Kentucky, the Statement of Receipts, Disbursements, and Excess Fees - Regulatory Basis of the Laurel County Clerk for the year ended December 31, 2023, and the related notes to the financial statement and have issued our report thereon dated July 25, 2024. The Laurel County Clerk's financial statement is prepared on a regulatory basis of accounting, which demonstrates compliance with the Commonwealth of Kentucky's regulatory basis of accounting and budget laws, which is a basis of accounting other than accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

Report on Internal Control over Financial Reporting

In planning and performing our audit of the financial statement, we considered the Laurel County Clerk's internal control over financial reporting (internal control) as a basis for designing audit procedures that are appropriate in the circumstances for the purpose of expressing our opinion on the financial statement, but not for the purpose of expressing an opinion on the effectiveness of the Laurel County Clerk's internal control. Accordingly, we do not express an opinion on the effectiveness of the Laurel County Clerk's internal control.

A *deficiency in internal control* exists when the design or operation of a control does not allow management or employees in the normal course of performing their assigned functions, to prevent, or detect and correct misstatements on a timely basis. A *material weakness* is a deficiency, or combination of deficiencies, in internal control, such that there is a reasonable possibility that a material misstatement of the entity's financial statement will not be prevented or detected and corrected on a timely basis. A *significant deficiency* is a deficiency, or a combination of deficiencies, in internal control that is less severe than a material weakness, yet important enough to merit attention by those charged with governance.

Our consideration of internal control was for the limited purpose described in the first paragraph of this section and was not designed to identify all deficiencies in internal control that might be material weaknesses or significant deficiencies. Given these limitations, during our audit we did not identify any deficiencies in internal control that we consider to be material weaknesses. However, material weaknesses may exist that have not been identified.

209 ST. CLAIR STREET FRANKFORT, KY 40601-1817 Report On Internal Control Over Financial Reporting And On Compliance And Other Matters Based On An Audit Of The Financial Statement Performed In Accordance With *Government Auditing Standards* (Continued)

Report on Compliance And Other Matters

As part of obtaining reasonable assurance about whether the Laurel County Clerk's financial statement is free of material misstatement, we performed tests of its compliance with certain provisions of laws, regulations, contracts, and grant agreements, noncompliance with which could have a direct and material effect on the financial statement. However, providing an opinion on compliance with those provisions was not an objective of our audit and, accordingly, we do not express such an opinion. The results of our tests disclosed no instances of noncompliance or other matters that are required to be reported under *Government Auditing Standards*.

Purpose of this Report

The purpose of this report is solely to describe the scope of our testing of internal control and compliance and the results of that testing, and not to provide an opinion on the effectiveness of the entity's internal control or on compliance. This report is an integral part of an audit performed in accordance with *Government Auditing Standards* in considering the entity's internal control and compliance. Accordingly, this communication is not suitable for any other purpose.

Respectfully submitted,

allisa Ball

Allison Ball Auditor of Public Accounts Frankfort, KY

July 25, 2024