

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT

Administrative Law Judge Robert L. Reibold

ALC Case No. 23-ALJ-04-0768
Appellate Case No. 2025-000128

SIDNEY FIELDS, # 254392,

APPELLANT,

v.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS,

RESPONDENT.

FINAL BRIEF OF RESPONDENT

**SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS**

Christina Catoe Bigelow
Deputy General Counsel
Office of General Counsel
South Carolina Dept. of Corrections
Post Office Box 21787
Columbia, South Carolina 29221
(803) 896-8508

ATTORNEY FOR RESPONDENT

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SC Court of Appeals

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF AUTHORITIESii

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE ON APPEAL1

STATEMENT OF THE CASE 2

STANDARD OF REVIEW3

ARGUMENT4

CONCLUSION.....5

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES

CASES

Hendley v. Budget & Control Bd., 325 S.C. 413, 481 S.E.2d 159 (Ct. App. 1996) ..3

STATUTES AND RULES

S.C. Code § 1-23-600.....4

S.C. Code § 1-23-6103

S.C. Code § 1-23-630.....5

STATEMENT OF ISSUE ON APPEAL

THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT PROPERLY DISMISSED THE CASE BECAUSE APPELLANT SIGNED A SETTLEMENT STATEMENT AND A STIPULATION OF DISMISSAL AGREEING TO DISMISS THE CASE.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

This matter comes before this Court pursuant to the appeal of Sidney Fields (Appellant), an inmate confined in the South Carolina Department of Corrections (SCDC). Appellant submitted Step 1 and 2 grievances in 2023 concerning his work in Prison Industries. These grievances were denied, and Appellant appealed to the Administrative Law Court on December 11, 2023. On November 6, 2024, Appellant signed a Stipulation of Dismissal agreeing to dismiss ALC case # 23-ALJ-04-0768-AP. He also signed a Statement of Settlement on the same date stating that the parties have agreed to settle ALC case # 23-ALJ-04-0768-AP. Appellant also signed off on a letter issued by the Department of Corrections indicating that Appellant was agreeing to settle ALC case # 23-ALJ-04-0768-AP and ALC case # 24-ALJ-04-0197-AP for a stated sum of money. On January 2, 2025, Judge Reibold dismissed the ALC case due to the signed Stipulation of Dismissal. This appeal follows.

STANDARD OF REVIEW

S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-610(B) provides the general standard of review for appeals from the Administrative Law Court:

The review of the administrative law judge's order must be confined to the record. The reviewing tribunal may affirm the decision or remand the case for further proceedings; or it may reverse or modify the decision if the substantive rights of the petitioner have been prejudiced because the finding, conclusion, or decision is:

- (a) in violation of constitutional or statutory provisions;
- (b) in excess of the statutory authority of the agency;
- (c) made upon unlawful procedure;
- (d) affected by other error of law;
- (e) clearly erroneous in view of the reliable, probative and substantial evidence on the whole record; or
- (f) arbitrary or capricious or characterized by abuse of discretion or clearly unwarranted exercise of discretion.

In an appeal of a final decision of an administrative agency, the standard of appellate review is whether the ALC's findings are supported by substantial evidence. S.C. Code Ann. § 1-23-610(B). "Substantial evidence" is evidence which, considering the record as a whole, would allow a reasonable mind to reach the same conclusion that administrative agency reached. Hendley v. S.C. State Budget & Control Bd., 325 S.C. 413, 481 S.E.2d 159 (Ct. App. 1996). A reviewing court shall not substitute its own judgment for that of the ALC as to findings of fact, but it may reverse or modify decisions that are controlled by errors of law or that are clearly erroneous in view of the substantial evidence on the record as a whole. Id.

ARGUMENT

THE ADMINISTRATIVE LAW COURT PROPERLY DISMISSED THE CASE BECAUSE APPELLANT SIGNED A SETTLEMENT STATEMENT AND A STIPULATION OF DISMISSAL AGREEING TO DISMISS THE CASE.

Appellant submitted Step 1 and 2 grievances in 2023 concerning his work in Prison Industries. (See R. p. 14-15). These grievances were denied, and Appellant appealed to the Administrative Law Court on December 11, 2023. (See R. p. 16). On November 6, 2024, Appellant signed a Stipulation of Dismissal agreeing to dismiss ALC case # 23-ALJ-04-0768-AP, which is the case at issue in this appeal. (See R. p. 57). He also signed a Statement of Settlement on the same date stating that the parties have agreed to settle ALC case # 23-ALJ-04-0768-AP. (See R. p. 55). Appellant also signed off on a letter issued by the Department of Corrections indicating that Appellant was agreeing to settle ALC case # 23-ALJ-04-0768-AP and ALC case # 24-ALJ-04-0197-AP for a stated sum of money. (See R. p. 51). On January 2, 2025, Judge Reibold dismissed the ALC case due to the signed Stipulation of Dismissal. (See R. p. 12-13).

In his Brief, Appellant argues that the ALC erred in refusing to consider Appellant's request for a settlement modification. Appellant asserts that the ALC did have jurisdiction to provide him with "equitable relief," to include rescission or modification of the settlement agreement between Appellant and SCDC. (See Brief of Appellant, p. 11-12). In support of this assertion, Appellant relies on S.C. Code 1-23-600 (F). This code section provides as follows: "[n]otwithstanding another provision of law, **a state agency authorized by law to seek injunctive relief** may apply to the Administrative Law Court for injunctive or equitable relief pursuant to Section 1-23-630. The provisions of this section do not affect the authority of an agency to apply for injunctive relief as part of a civil action filed in the court of common pleas." S.C. Code 1-23-600(F) (emphasis added). This section does not support the notion that the ALC has authority to provide Appellant with an

equitable remedy since it applies only to state agencies authorized by law to seek injunctive relief. Appellant also points to S.C. Code 1-23-630. This code section provides that the Administrative Law Court can issue “those remedial writs as are necessary to give effect to its jurisdiction” and that the Administrative Law Court “may authorize the use of mediation in a manner that does not conflict with other provisions of law and is consistent with the division's rules of procedure.” S.C. Code 1-23-630. This code section also does not support the notion that the ALC could provide Appellant with the equitable remedy of rescission or modification of a settlement agreement.

Here, the Administrative Law Court properly dismissed the case below where Appellant signed a Stipulation of Dismissal agreeing to dismiss this ALC case after signing a settlement agreement. Accordingly, this Court should uphold the ALC’s dismissal of the case.

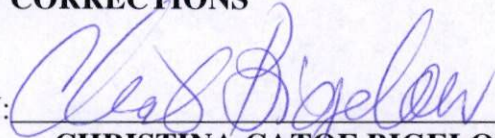
CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, this Court should dismiss the appeal.

Respectfully submitted,

**SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT
OF CORRECTIONS**

BY:



CHRISTINA CATOE BIGELOW

Deputy General Counsel
Office of General Counsel
S. C. Department of Corrections
Post Office Box 21787
Columbia, South Carolina 29221
(803) 896-8508

April 11, 2025

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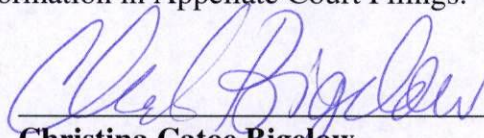
v.

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS,

RESPONDENT.

CERTIFICATE OF COUNSEL

The undersigned hereby certifies that the **Final Brief of Respondent** complies with Rule 211(b), SCACR, and also complies with the South Carolina Supreme Court's April 15, 2014, order entitled "Revised Order Concerning Personal Identifying Information and Other Sensitive Information in Appellate Court Filings."



Christina Catoe Bigelow
Deputy General Counsel
Office of General Counsel
S. C. Department of Corrections
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