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Aug 12 2025

SC Court of Appeals

THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals

APPEAL FROM GREENVILLE COUNTY
Court of Common Pleas

Jessica A. Salvini, Circuit Court Judge
Civil Action No. 2024-CP-23-02744

Appellate Case No: 2025-001550

Bruce Wilson,, Appellant

v.

Pranceton Rodrigues Williams and Ennis M. Fant., Defendants,

Of Whom Ennis M. Fant....., Respondent.

**MOTION TO STAY PROCEEDINGS IN
THE 13TH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT COURT
PENDING RESOLUTION OF APPEAL**

TO: THE HONORABLE COURT OF APPEALS OF SOUTH CAROLINA

Bruce Wilson ("Appellant"), appearing pro se, respectfully moves this Court to stay all proceedings in the 13th Judicial Circuit Court of Common Pleas that involve determinations of his status as a public figure, pending resolution of the current appeal in Bruce Wilson v. Ennis M. Fant, SC Court of Appeals Case No. 2025-001550. This Motion addresses the critical need to clarify whether Appellant's community activism qualifies him as a public figure under South

Carolina law, particularly in light of the Supreme Court's decision in *Cruce v. Berkeley County School District*, 442 S.C. 1, 896 S.E.2d 765 (2024).

Appellant relies on *Cruce* to demonstrate that he does not meet the legal standard for public figure status. In *Cruce*, this Court carefully distinguished between public employees and private citizens, holding that government workers may be considered public figures only when their positions "invite public scrutiny and discussion...unrelated to the current controversy." As a private community activist, Appellant falls outside *Cruce's* narrow holding. The lower court's failure to properly apply *Cruce's* limitations has resulted in the erroneous classification of Appellant as a public figure, imposing an improper "**actual malice**" standard that threatens to deprive him of legitimate legal recourse, at the pleading stage.

The appeal now before this Court presents the crucial opportunity to clarify *Cruce's* application to private activists like Appellant. This clarification is essential because multiple pending cases in the 13th Circuit threaten to compound the lower court's potential error by applying the same flawed public figure determination. Judicial economy strongly favors staying these proceedings until this Court can: (1) confirm that *Cruce* does not automatically extend to private citizens engaged in community activism; and (2) establish the proper standard for assessing public figure status in such cases.

Allowing cases to proceed under the current, incorrect interpretation would cause Appellant irreparable harm. Each ruling that improperly applies the "**actual malice**"¹ standard creates additional barriers to justice that cannot be fully remedied even if this Court ultimately rules in Appellant's favor. Moreover, the continued litigation of these matters under an erroneous

¹ *Loveless v. Stiles*, No. 2023-000145, 2025 WL 1825553, (S.C. Ct. App. July 2, 2025)

legal framework wastes scarce judicial resources and risks inconsistent rulings across multiple cases.

Appellant respectfully submits that this case presents precisely the type of controlling legal question for which stays pending appeal are designed. The proper application of *Cruce* to private activists represents a fundamental issue of first impression that will shape defamation law in South Carolina for years to come. This Court should exercise its authority under S.C. Code Ann. § 14-3-330 and Rule 225, SCACR to stay all related proceedings until it can provide the necessary guidance on this important matter. Additionally, Appellant requests an **expedited appeal** to promptly address the central legal questions concerning: 1. The proper standard for public figure status in defamation cases involving private activists; and 2. The scope of *Cruce*'s applicability beyond public employees.

For the foregoing reasons, Appellant respectfully moves this Court to enter a stay of all proceedings in the Thirteenth Judicial Circuit pertaining to the determination of Appellant's public figure status, pending the resolution of the instant appeal in *Wilson v. Fant*, Appellate Case No. 2025-001550. The underlying action in the circuit court, *Wilson v. Fant*, Case No. **2024-CP-23-0458**, involves identical parties and substantially overlapping legal issues. A **stay** is necessary to promote judicial economy, avoid inconsistent rulings, and preserve this Court's authority to conclusively determine the controlling legal questions on appeal. And **Grant** an expedited appeal.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Bruce Wilson
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Pro Se Appellant

August 12, 2025
Greenville, South Carolina

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PROOF OF SERVICE

I certify that on August 12, 2025, I served a copy of APPELLANT’S MOTION FOR
STATY via cc: E-Mail to ctappfiling@sccourts.org and United States Mail, prepaid and addressed
to:

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