

RECEIVED

Feb 20 2026

SC Court of Appeals



SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON INDIGENT DEFENSE

Division of Appellate Defense  
1330 Lady Street, Suite 401  
Columbia, South Carolina 29201-3332

Post Office Box 11589  
Columbia, South Carolina 29211-1589  
Telephone: (803) 734-1330  
Facsimile: (803) 734-1345

Wanda H. Carter, Chief Appellate Defender

February 20, 2026

Jenny Abbott Kitchings  
Clerk, South Carolina Court of Appeals  
PO Box 11629  
Columbia, SC 29211

Re: Jody Lynn Ward v. The State  
Appellate Case No. 2025-001703

Dear Ms. Kitchings:

This letter serves to clarify the Office of Appellate Defense's understanding of the procedural posture of this case.

The original notice of appeal in this case was filed on August 25, 2025. The appeal was accepted, and the initial was letter sent to then-counsel Tristan Shaffer, Esquire, on September 2, 2025. A motion to relieve counsel was filed on October 7, 2025 by Appellant. This Court notified Counsel Shaffer the following day, October 8, 2025, that the time for ordering the transcript had expired. In response to that, Counsel Shaffer filed a motion joining Appellant's motion to relieve and requested a 30-day extension to request a transcript in the matter on October 20, 2025. Appellant also filed *pro se* motions to extend the time in which to order a transcript and stating that the transcript had been ordered on October 20, 2025.

On December 1, 2025 this Court ordered the case held in abeyance in order for this office to screen Appellant's case for representation. On January 15, 2026, our office notified this Court that Appellant was approved for representation. By order dated January 21, 2026 (See Attached Exhibit A) this Court granted the motions to relieve Counsel Shaffer and appointed this office to represent Appellant. This Court further ordered that the petition for writ of certiorari and appendix be filed within 30 days of the order. This Court did not rule on the motions to extend the time for a transcript.

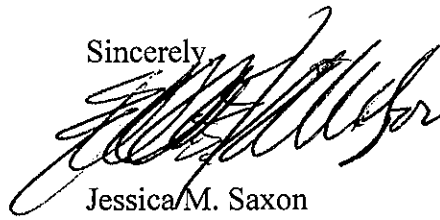
Upon receiving this case, our office learned that an underlying hearing was not held on Appellant's Post-Conviction DNA Application, and there were no transcripts that needed to be ordered for this appeal to move forward. The office did not file a transcript ordered letter as no transcript was ordered - additionally, the time for ordering a transcript had expired and the court had never ruled on prior counsel or Appellant's *pro se* motions for an extension.

It is the understanding of undersigned counsel that this Court's January 21, 2026 Order directing our office to serve and file the petition for writ of certiorari and appendix within thirty days, started the time line for filing in this case. With this understanding, undersigned counsel filed the first motion for extension in this case today, February 20, 2026 in accordance with that Order.

Undersigned counsel currently has no knowledge of any hearings held on this motion and therefore has not requested a transcript be ordered. If necessary, undersigned counsel respectfully requests this Court accept this letter as notification that no transcript was ordered and none is currently needed in this appeal.

If the Court has any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jessica M. Saxon', written in a cursive style.

Jessica M. Saxon  
Appellate Defender

JMS/kw

cc: Melody J. Brown

The South Carolina Court of Appeals

Jody Lynn Ward, Petitioner,

v.

State of South Carolina, Respondent.

Appellate Case No. 2025-001703

RECEIVED

Feb 20 2026

SC Court of Appeals

The Honorable Roger M. Young, Sr.  
Georgetown County

Trial Court Case No. 2003GS2201030, 2003GS2201031

---

ORDER

---

Both Petitioner and Petitioner's counsel, Tristan Shaffer, have filed motions to relieve counsel. After careful consideration, the motions are granted. Mr. Shaffer is removed as counsel for Petitioner. Appellate Defense will assume representation on behalf of Mr. Ward. Petitioner should proceed to serve and file the petition for writ of certiorari within thirty (30) days of the date of this order, with any return being due thirty (30) days from the file date of Petitioner's petition.

FOR THE COURT  
BY Jasmine D. Smith, Deputy  
CLERK

Columbia, South Carolina  
January 21, 2026

cc:  
Tristan Michael Shaffer, Esquire  
Melody Jane Brown, Esquire

## EXHIBIT A

Wanda H. Carter, Esquire  
Jody L. Ward, 00300644