



The South Carolina Court of Appeals

JENNY ABBOTT KITCHINGS
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CHIEF DEPUTY CLERK

POST OFFICE BOX 11629
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29211
1220 SENATE STREET
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29201
TELEPHONE: (803) 734-1890
FAX: (803) 734-1839
www.sccourts.org

June 3, 2026

Mr. Donald Jay Davis, Jr., Esquire
PO Box 993
Charleston SC 29402

Mr. James D. Gandy, III, Esquire
PO Box 993
CHARLESTON SC 29402

Mr. Russell Grainger Hines, Esquire
PO Box 993
Charleston SC 29402-0993

Mr. Ted Ashton Phillips, III, Esquire
PO Box 993
Charleston SC 29402

Mr. Samuel Richard Clawson, Jr., Esquire
2 Amherst Street
Charleston SC 29403

Ms. Christina Rae Fagnoli, Esquire
2 Amherst Street
Charleston SC 29403

Ms. Laura Kell Wilkes-D'Amato, Esquire
2 Amherst Street
Charleston SC 29403

Mr. Stephen Lynwood Brown, Esquire
PO Box 993
Charleston SC 29402-0993

Mr. Bert Glenn Utsey, III, Esquire
2 Amherst Street
Charleston SC 29403

Re: Joe Bryan v. THI of South Carolina at Charleston, LLC
Appellate Case No. 2025-000237

Dear Counsel:

Enclosed is the decision of the Court. The remittitur will be sent as provided by Rule 221(b) of the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules.

Very truly yours,


CLERK

cc: The Honorable Jennifer B. McCoy

**THIS OPINION HAS NO PRECEDENTIAL VALUE. IT SHOULD NOT BE
CITED OR RELIED ON AS PRECEDENT IN ANY PROCEEDING
EXCEPT AS PROVIDED BY RULE 268(d)(2), SCACR.**

**THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
In The Court of Appeals**

Joe Bryan, Respondent,

v.

THI of South Carolina at Charleston, LLC d/b/a
Riverside Health and Rehab, Appellant.

Appellate Case No. 2025-000237

Appeal From Charleston County
Jennifer B. McCoy, Circuit Court Judge,

Unpublished Opinion No. 2026-UP-261
Submitted May 21, 2026 – Filed June 3, 2026

AFFIRMED

Stephen Lynwood Brown, Russell Grainger Hines, James
D. Gandy, III, Donald Jay Davis, Jr., and Ted Ashton
Phillips, III, all of Clement Rivers, LLP, of Charleston,
for Appellant.

Bert Glenn Utsey, III, Christina Rae Fagnoli, Laura Kell
Wilkes-D'Amato, all of Clawson Fagnoli Utsey, LLC,
and Samuel Richard Clawson, Jr., all of Charleston, for
Respondent.

PER CURIAM: THI of South Carolina at Charleston, LLC d/b/a Riverside Health and Rehab (the Facility) appeals the circuit court's order denying its motion to compel to arbitration the claims of Joe Bryan. On appeal, the Facility argues the circuit court erred by denying its motion to compel arbitration. We affirm pursuant to Rule 220(b), SCACR.

First, we hold the circuit court did not err in denying the Facility's motion to compel arbitration because the Admission Agreement and the Arbitration Agreement did not merge. See *Zabinski v. Bright Acres Assocs.*, 346 S.C. 580, 596, 553 S.E.2d 110, 118 (2001) ("The question of the arbitrability of a claim is an issue for judicial determination, unless the parties provide otherwise."); *New Hope Missionary Baptist Church v. Paragon Builders*, 379 S.C. 620, 625, 667 S.E.2d 1, 3 (Ct. App. 2008) ("Appeal from the denial of a motion to compel arbitration is subject to de novo review."); *Stokes v. Metro. Life Ins. Co.*, 351 S.C. 606, 609-10, 571 S.E.2d 711, 713 (Ct. App. 2002) ("However, the circuit court's factual findings will not be overruled if there is any evidence reasonably supporting them."); *MBNA Am. Bank, N.A. v. Christianson*, 377 S.C. 210, 214, 659 S.E.2d 209, 211 (Ct. App. 2008) ("[W]e apply South Carolina law to the initial determination of arbitrability but look to federal law for additional guidance."); *Wilson v. Willis*, 426 S.C. 326, 335, 827 S.E.2d 167, 172 (2019) ("Whether an arbitration agreement may be enforced against a nonsignatory to the agreement is a matter subject to de novo review by an appellate court."); *Est. of Solesbee by Bayne v. Fundamental Clinical & Operational Servs., LLC*, 438 S.C. 638, 648-49, 885 S.E.2d 144, 149 (Ct. App. 2023) (finding the admission agreement and arbitration agreement did not merge after considering (1) the admission agreement provided it was governed by South Carolina law and the arbitration agreement provided it was governed by federal law, (2) the arbitration agreement recognized the two documents were separate by stating the arbitration agreement "shall survive any termination or breach of this Agreement or the Admission Agreement," (3) the documents were separately paginated and had their own signature pages, and (4) signing the arbitration agreement was not a precondition to admission); *Coleman v. Mariner Health Care, Inc.*, 407 S.C. 346, 355, 755 S.E.2d 450, 455 (2014) (concluding that by the documents' own terms, language in the admission agreement that "recognize[d] the 'separatedness' of [the arbitration agreement] and the admission agreement" and a clause allowing the arbitration agreement to "be disclaimed within thirty days of signing while the admission agreement could not" indicated the parties' intention "that the common law doctrine of merger not apply"); *Hodge v. UniHealth Post-Acute Care of Bamberg, LLC*, 422 S.C. 544, 562-63, 813 S.E.2d 292, 302 (Ct. App. 2018) (determining an admissions agreement and arbitration agreement did not merge because the fact "the [a]dmissions [a]greement indicated

it was governed by South Carolina law, whereas the [a]rbitration [a]greement stated it was governed by federal law[,]" "each document was separately paginated and had its own signature page[,]" and "the [a]rbitration [a]greement stated signing it was not a precondition to admission" evidenced the parties' intention that the documents be construed as separate instruments). Here, as in *Solesbee* and *Hodge*, (1) the two agreements were governed by different bodies of law because the Admission Agreement was governed by state law and the Arbitration Agreement was governed by federal law; (2) each document was separately labeled, numbered, and contained its own signature page; (3) the Arbitration Agreement recognized the two documents were separate, stating the Arbitration Agreement "shall survive any termination or breach of this Agreement or the Admission Agreement"; and (4) the Facility acknowledged that signing the Arbitration Agreement was not a prerequisite to admission to the Facility. Thus, the Admission Agreement and Arbitration Agreement did not merge.

Second, because we find the agreements did not merge—a controlling consideration in whether the Arbitration Agreement bound Bryan—we decline to reach the Facility's remaining arguments. See *Futch v. McAllister Towing of Georgetown, Inc.*, 335 S.C. 598, 613, 518 S.E.2d 591, 598 (1999) (ruling an appellate court need not address remaining issues when its resolution of a prior issue is dispositive); *Est. of Solesbee*, 438 S.C. at 649, 885 S.E.2d at 149 (determining that because the admission agreement and arbitration agreement did not merge, the equitable estoppel argument was properly denied); *Coleman*, 407 S.C. at 356, 755 S.E.2d at 455 ("Since there was no merger here, appellants' equitable estoppel argument was properly denied by the circuit court."); *Hodge*, 422 S.C. at 563, 813 S.E.2d at 302 (concluding "equitable estoppel would only apply if documents were merged").

AFFIRMED.¹

GEATHERS, HEWITT, and CURTIS, JJ., concur.

¹ We decide this case without oral argument pursuant to Rule 215, SCACR.