

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

COUNTY OF GREENVILLE

Roland O'Neil Rabon, Jr.,

Plaintiff,

v.

Paul Hulsey, Cherie Durand, Kimberly
Thomason, Devon Puriefoy, Desa
Ballard, Mayra Michalski, Margaret Ann
Miniard, John & Jane Does ##1-14,

Defendants.

Fred W. "Trey" Suggs, III,

Plaintiff,

v.

Paul Hulsey, Cherie Durand, Kimberly
Thomason, Devon Puriefoy, Desa
Ballard,

Defendants.

Clayton L. Jennings,

Plaintiff,

v.

Paul Hulsey, Cherie Durand, Kimberly
Thomason, Devon Puriefoy, Desa
Ballard, Stacey Grist, Margaret Ann
Miniard, John & Jane Does 1-14,

Defendants.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

C.A. No. 2024-CP-23-03236

ORDER FOR SANCTIONS

RECEIVED

Aug 11 2026

SC Court of Appeals

C.A. No. 2024-CP-23-03258

C.A. No. 2024-CP-23-03271

Joseph M. Plaxco,
Plaintiff,

v.

Paul Hulse, Cherie Durand, Kimberly
Thomason, Devon Puriefoy, Desa
Ballard, Mayra Michalski, Luis Michalski,
John & Jane Does 1-14,

Defendants.

C.A. No. 2024-CP-23-03329

Jennifer L. Browning and Browning
Geriatric Consulting, LLC,

Plaintiffs,

v.

Paul Hulse, Cherie Durand, Kimberly
Thomason, Devon Puriefoy, Desa
Ballard, Mayra Michalski, Luis Michalski,
Margaret Miniard, Stacey Grist, John &
Jane Does 1-14,

Defendants.

C.A. No. 2024-CP-23-03730

Plaintiffs Fred W. "Trey" Suggs, III, Clayton L. Jennings, Joseph M. Plaxco, Ronald
O'Neil Rabon, Jr., Jennifer L. Browning, and Browning Geriatric Consulting, LLC
(collectively "Plaintiffs") jointly moved for sanctions under Rule 37 of the South Carolina
Rules of Civil Procedure based on the conduct of Defendants Desa Ballard, Kimberly

Thomason, and Devon Puriefoy (collectively “Defendants”) at their depositions which took place on August 5, 2025, August 7, 2025, and August 8, 2025, respectively.

During the depositions, all three Defendants essentially refused to answer questions about the letters which form the basis of the lawsuits filed against Defendants. Ms. Ballard was asked three hundred and four (304) questions and refused to answer one hundred and seventy-nine (179) of them. Ms. Thomason was asked three hundred and forty-one (341) questions and refused to answer one hundred and twenty-four (124). Mr. Puriefoy was asked three hundred and eighty-five (385) questions and refused to answer one hundred and fifty-five (155). Critically, Defendants refused to answer the most basic and foundational questions regarding the letters—information Plaintiffs were plainly entitled to obtain in discovery. For example, Ms. Ballard refused to confirm whether she mailed the letters, who drafted them, or whether she had ever even seen the letters before:

15	Q.	But you put the -- did you mail these
16		letters?
17	A.	I'm not going to answer questions about
18		these letters.
19	Q.	Who drafted these letters?
20	A.	I'm not going to answer questions about
21		these letters.
22	Q.	Have you ever seen these letters?
23	A.	I'm not going to answer questions about
24		these letters.

(Ballard Dep. (Aug. 5, 2025) 9:15-24). Ms. Thomason responded similarly to the same questions:

8	Q.	When did the drafting of these letters
9		begin?
10	A.	I'm not going to discuss these letters.

(Thomason Dep. (Aug. 6, 2025) 12:8-10). Taking it a step further, Ms. Thomason also refused to answer questions even after her counsel expressly advised her that she could do so:

22	MS. CARROLL:	My client may answer the
23		questions.
24	THE WITNESS:	I'm not answering the
25		question.

(*Id.* at 12:22-25). Despite sending the letters and arguing they are subject to privilege as they relate to a potential lawsuit, Mr. Puriefoy refused to identify who he represented in relation to the letters that he signed and sent on behalf of his alleged clients:

19	Okay.	And so with respect to Deposition
20	Exhibit Number 2,	who was your client in relation to
21	that exhibit?	
22	A.	I'm not discussing the letter.

(Devon Puriefoy Dep. (Aug. 8, 2025) 16:19-22). Further, Plaintiffs complain that Defendants made assertions of attorney-client privilege and work product immunity which were improper and in bad faith. In other words, these Defendants refused to participate in discovery despite being experienced litigators and officers of the court. Based upon a review of each deposition transcript, the Court finds that each Defendant refused to answer questions that were highly relevant to the claims and defenses in this action. Moreover, in the few instances where Defendants asserted privilege, the Court finds that the asserted privilege did not apply and did not justify the refusal to answer.

In awarding sanctions in this case, this Court is mindful of the South Carolina Court of Appeals admonishment in the case of *Downey v. Dixon*, 362 S.E.2d 317 (Ct. App. 1987) that sanctions be meaningful to discourage violations of the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure and Rules of Professional Conduct. *Downey* is particularly applicable here where conduct violating discovery was done by lawyers who know the rules of discovery.

Therefore, this Court awards sanctions against each Defendant in the amount of ten thousand and 00/100ths dollars (\$10,000.00) for a total of **thirty thousand and 00/100ths dollars (\$30,000.00)** which shall be paid within ten (10) days of the filing of this Order. This amount represents the Plaintiffs' lawyers time for deposing the Defendants as well as the costs associated with the depositions. Plaintiffs have agreed for this award to be paid to Nelson Mullins Riley & Scarborough, LLP which shall be responsible for distributing the funds evenly amongst the Plaintiffs.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

Eugene C. Griffith, Jr.
Presiding Circuit Judge



Greenville Common Pleas

Case Caption: Joseph M Plaxco vs. Kimberly Thomason , defendant, et al

Case Number: 2024CP2303329

Type: Order/Sanctions

It is so ordered

Eugene C. Griffith, Jr. 2154