

ORIGINAL

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS

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Appeal From Pickens County  
The Honorable Robin B. Stilwell, Circuit Court Judge  
Appellate Case No. 2014-000015

SC Court of Appeals

THE STATE,

Respondent,

v.

CYNTHIA MANSELL GREENFIELD,

Appellant.

**FINAL BRIEF OF RESPONDENT**

ALAN WILSON  
Attorney General

DEBORAH R.J. SHUPE  
Senior Assistant Deputy Attorney General  
SC Bar No. 5098

Post Office Box 11549  
Columbia, SC 29211  
(803) 734-3727

W. Walter Wilkins  
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

214 E. Main Street  
Pickens, SC 29671  
(864) 898-5905

ATTORNEYS FOR RESPONDENT

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

IN THE COURT OF APPEALS

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## STATEMENT OF ISSUES ON APPEAL

I. The circuit court properly qualified the lead investigator as an expert in clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing based on his extensive training and experience in narcotics investigations, specifically methamphetamine and methamphetamine labs.

II. The circuit court properly denied Appellant's directed verdict motion because there was ample evidence from which a reasonable juror could find her guilty of trafficking over twenty-eight grams of methamphetamine.

## **STATEMENT OF THE CASE**

The Pickens County Grand Jury indicted Appellant Cynthia Mansell Greenfield on one count of trafficking methamphetamine. The case was called for a jury trial on December 16, 2013, before the Honorable Robin B. Stilwell, Circuit Court Judge.

The jury convicted Appellant of trafficking over twenty-eight grams of methamphetamine, and the circuit court sentenced her to nine years incarceration. This appeal followed.

## STATEMENT OF FACTS

On December 10, 2013, the Pickens County Grand Jury indicted Appellant on one count of trafficking methamphetamine, arising from a year long investigation of pseudoephedrine purchases by Appellant and multiple co-defendants. The case was called for a jury trial on December 16, 2013, before the Honorable Robin B. Stilwell, Circuit Court Judge.

Many named co-defendants testified they made multiple purchases of Sudafed (or the generic brands) during 2011, and gave all or some of it to Appellant and her husband and co-defendant Michael Mealor (“Mealor”). The primary ingredient in Sudafed is pseudoephedrine, which is a key component in manufacturing methamphetamine. In exchange for the Sudafed, most of the co-defendants received methamphetamine from Appellant and Mealor, and others received money.<sup>1</sup>

The amount of pseudoephedrine someone can purchase per day and month is restricted, and pharmacies submit records of all pseudoephedrine sales to a national precursor database (NPLEX) maintained by Appriss, a software company headquartered in Kentucky. The system notifies a pharmacy if a person attempting to purchase pseudoephedrine has already purchased the maximum amount allowed that day or month,<sup>2</sup> and blocks the sale. (Trial Transcript [TT], pp. 110-125; Record on Appeal [R.], pp. 20-35).

A Pickens County Sheriff’s Department reserve officer testified he started investigating after he reviewed NPLEX records, and noticed multiple pseudoephedrine purchases by people using the same address in Six Mile, SC. The investigation

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<sup>1</sup>The specific testimony, with relevant record citation, is set forth in Issue II below.

ultimately revealed Appellant and Mealor, and numerous people associated with them, purchased pseudoephedrine on multiple occasions in 2011. (TT, pp. 172-175; R., pp. 46-49).

The State presented NPLEX records reflecting the co-defendants' pseudoephedrine purchases, including dates when they attempted to purchase it but were blocked by the system. Based on the co-defendants' testimony, Appellant and Mealor received 179.76 grams of pseudoephedrine from them between January and December, 2011. In addition, NPLEX records showed Appellant personally purchased 68.64 grams of pseudoephedrine during that time period, and was blocked from purchasing it five times, for a total of 248.4 grams of pseudoephedrine received or purchased in 2011.<sup>2</sup> (TT, pp.175-190, State's Exhibits 1-40; R., pp. 49-64, 222-398).

Captain Chad Brooks of the Pickens County Sheriff's Department testified his law enforcement career began in 1989, and he supervised the Department's detectives division, which includes narcotics investigations. He worked full-time as a narcotics investigator until he became the division supervisor in January 2013, and participated in over 10,000 narcotics investigations over the course of his career. In addition, he had over 1000 hours specialized training on narcotics investigations, including specific training regarding the manufacturing of methamphetamine, and was certified by the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency as a methamphetamine site safety officer, which authorized him to enter and seize methamphetamine labs. (TT, pp. 423-427; R., pp. 142-146).

During his methamphetamine training, Capt. Brooks learned about various methods used to manufacture it, and personally manufactured it in the SLED lab under

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<sup>2</sup>The NPLEX records also revealed Mealor personally purchased an additional 69.36 grams of pseudoephedrine in 2011.

controlled conditions. He also learned about the pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine yield rates. He stated he was previously qualified in court as an expert in narcotics investigations generally, and clandestine methamphetamine labs specifically. (TT, pp. 427-429; R., pp. 146-148).

The State offered Capt. Brooks as an expert in the field of clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing. Appellant objected to any testimony regarding pseudoephedrine/methamphetamine yield rates, contending it required an expert in chemistry, and Capt. Brooks was not a chemist. The circuit court overruled the objection, and qualified Capt. Brooks as an expert in the field requested by the State, finding he was qualified by his training and experience, and testifying about yield rates did not require a specific degree. (TT, pp. 429-437; R., pp. 148-156).

Capt. Brooks testified he had investigated approximately 200 methamphetamine labs, and explained the three basic manufacturing methods: red fee, birch, and shake and bake (also called one pot). People using the shake and bake method generally use two liter plastic bottles, and add all the ingredients, including pseudoephedrine, at the same time, which initiates the chemical reaction. The reaction produces a liquid, which is then salted or gassed out to leave the methamphetamine powder. (TT, pp. 439-447; R., pp. 158-166). He also testified about "smurfing," which is the term used when the methamphetamine cooks have other people purchase pseudoephedrine for them in order to avoid the amount restrictions. (TT, pp. 447-448; R., pp. 166-167).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>This is a commonly known method used to "game" the system. See <http://www.wistv.com/story/25524990/meth-makers-can-easily-game-pseudoephedrine-system?page=full&N=F>.

Over objection, Capt. Brooks testified he used three grams of pseudoephedrine in the SLED lab, which produced 2.7 grams of methamphetamine, or a 92% yield. Depending on the method used, he stated his training and experience indicated the lowest yield would be 40% to 50%, and outlined various factors that could affect the yield. (TT, pp. 448-452; R., pp. 167-171).

At the close of the State's case, Appellant moved for a directed verdict on the ground the State failed to produce sufficient evidence of a conspiracy to manufacture over 100 grams of methamphetamine, and all the evidence regarding amounts was speculative. The circuit court took the motion under advisement, particularly as to the weight manufactured. (TT, pp. 523-538; R., pp. 191-206).

After the defense rested its case, Appellant renewed the directed verdict motion on the indicted charge of trafficking over 100 grams of methamphetamine. The circuit court denied the motion, but the State then moved to amend the indictment and reduce the amount to trafficking between 28 and 100 grams, which the circuit court granted without objection. (TT, pp. 664-672; R., pp. 207-215).

The jury convicted Appellant of manufacturing over 28 grams of methamphetamine, and the circuit court sentenced her to nine years incarceration. (TT, pp. 730, 737; R., pp. 217, 220). This appeal followed.

## ARGUMENT

### **I. The circuit court properly qualified the lead investigator as an expert in clandestine methamphetamine manufacturing based on his extensive training and experience in narcotics investigations, specifically methamphetamine and methamphetamine labs.**

Appellant asserts the circuit court erred in qualifying Capt. Brooks as an expert because he “did not meet the level of expertise that would qualify him as an expert in the amount of Meth allegedly produced by Appellant.” He contends the yield rate of pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine “was beyond the scope of [Capt. Brooks’] expertise” because he “lacked any chemical training other than having taken a chemistry class in high school.”

The admission or exclusion of evidence is a matter addressed to the sound discretion of the trial court, and its ruling will not be disturbed in the absence of a manifest abuse of discretion accompanied by probable prejudice. State v. Kromah, 401 S.C. 340, 737 S.E.2d 490, 495 (2013); State v. Price, 368 S.C. 494, 498, 629 S.E.2d 363, 365 (2006) (same); State v. Brown, 411 S.C. 332, 768 S.E.2d 246, 249 (Ct. App. 2015) (same); State v. Weaverling, 337 S.C. 460, 523 S.E.2d 787 (Ct. App. 1999) (same). A prejudicial abuse of discretion occurs when the conclusions of the trial court either lack evidentiary support or are controlled by an error of law. State v. White, 382 S.C. 265, 676 S.E.2d 684, 686 (2009); State v. Douglas, 369 S.C. 424, 429, 632 S.E.2d 845, 847-848 (2006) (same).

If scientific, technical, or **other specialized knowledge** will assist the trier of fact in understanding the evidence, or determining a fact in issue, a witness qualified as an expert by **knowledge, skill, experience, training**, or education, may testify about the evidence or fact in the form of an opinion or otherwise. Rule 702, SCRE. To be

competent to testify as an expert, “a witness must have acquired by reason of **study** or **experience** or both such **knowledge** and **skill** in a **profession** or science that he is better qualified than the jury to form an opinion on the particular subject of his testimony.” Gooding v. St. Francis Xavier Hospital, 326 S.C. 248, 487 S.E.2d 596, 598 (1996) (citation omitted) (emphasis added).

Qualification of an expert witness and the admissibility of the expert's testimony are matters within the trial court's discretion, and absent a showing of abuse, the appellate court will not disturb the trial court's determination regarding a witness' qualifications as an expert. State v. Baker, 2015 WL 543493, \*9 (S.C. Sup. Ct, filed February 11, 2015) (Toal, CJ, dissenting opinion) (*citing* State v. Schumpert, 312 S.C. 502, 435 S.E.2d 859 [1993]). Defects in an expert witness's education and experience go to the weight of the expert's testimony, rather than its admissibility. *Id.* (*citing* Gooding, 487 S.E.2d at 598).

Capt. Brooks had over twenty years experience in law enforcement, much of which involved narcotics investigations. He also had extensive training and experience involving methamphetamine manufacturing. He testified he “had over a thousand hours just specialized in narcotics investigations,” and was DEA certified as a site safety officer at methamphetamine labs. He had participated in “thousands” of general methamphetamine investigations, and approximately 200 investigations dealing with methamphetamine labs. (TT, pp. 423-430, 439; R., pp. 142-149, 158).

During his methamphetamine specific training, Capt. Brooks actually manufactured methamphetamine from pseudoephedrine in the SLED lab, and was trained on the methamphetamine yield rates from precursors, which is primarily a mathematical equation. Using the birch method in the SLED lab, he used three grams of

pseudoephedrine to produce 2.7 grams of methamphetamine (92% yield). Based on his training and experience, Capt. Brooks testified the yield rates depend on the method used and other factors, and the lowest yield rate was 40% to 50% pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine. (TT, pp. 448-449; R., pp.167-168).

Capt. Brooks' testimony clearly reveals his extensive knowledge, training and experience regarding methamphetamine manufacturing. As part of his training and experience, he learned there is a mathematical formula for calculating the amount of methamphetamine that can be manufactured from a given amount of pseudoephedrine, how to use the formula and factors affecting the yield rate. Notably, he did not render an opinion of the specific yield in this case, but merely testified the general yield rates ranged from 40% (worst case scenario) to 92% percent (best case scenario).

Appellant does not contest the fact methamphetamine can be manufactured from pseudoephedrine, but argues an expert chemist was required to testify about the yield rates. Published DEA data, however, indicates the typical yield rate is 50% to 75%, and the United States Sentencing Guidelines Commission used that data to establish a conversion rate of 50% pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine for sentencing purposes in federal courts. *See* U.S.S.G. §2D1.1, n. 8(D) (Drug Conversion Tables); *see also* United States v. Stacy, 769 F.3d 969, 977 (7<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2014) (sentencing guidelines use yield ratio of 50% pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine based on yield rates in typical clandestine methamphetamine labs); United States v. Martin, 438 F.3d 621, 625, 633-636 (6<sup>th</sup> Cir. 2006) (discussing basis for 50% conversion rate); U.S. Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Requesters, GAO-13-204, 6-7 (January 31, 2013)

(discussing conversion process and noting certain methods result in 90% to 95% conversion rates).

In short, the yield rates at issue are generally accepted and well-documented. Thus, Capt. Brooks was not required to be a chemist, personally develop the yield rates, or even know all the technical science behind the process, in order to testify as an expert about the generally accepted yield rates. *See People v. Reatherford*, 345 Ill.App.3d 327, 802 N.E.2d 340, 347 (2003) (police officer properly qualified as an expert in manufacturing methamphetamine and allowed to testify regarding yield rates of pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine based on his training and experience). Any purported “defects” in Capt. Brooks’ education and experience go to the weight of his testimony, not its admissibility. *Baker*, 2015 WL 543493, \*9.

There is ample evidence in the record to support the circuit court’s qualification of Capt. Brooks as an expert in clandestine methamphetamine labs, and admission of his testimony regarding the range of yield rates from such labs. The circuit court did not abuse its discretion, and its rulings should be affirmed.

**II. The circuit court properly denied Appellant's directed verdict motion because there was ample evidence from which a reasonable juror could find her guilty of trafficking over twenty-eight grams of methamphetamine.**

Appellant asserts the circuit court erred in denying her directed verdict motion because there was no evidence any amount of methamphetamine was actually possessed, produced, or trafficked within the timeframe of the investigation, and because experts disagree on yield rates, the State's evidence regarding the amount of methamphetamine produced was speculative. On the contrary, there was direct evidence Appellant possessed, produced and trafficked methamphetamine in 2011, and substantial circumstantial evidence of the amount of methamphetamine Appellant and Mealor manufactured during that time.

When ruling on a directed verdict motion, the trial court is concerned with the existence or nonexistence of evidence, not its weight, and must deny the motion when the State presents any direct evidence, or substantial circumstantial evidence, to prove guilt. State v. Gaines, 380 S.C. 23, 667 S.E.2d 728, 733 (2008); State v. Phillips, 411 S.C. 124, 767 S.E.2d 444, 448 (Ct. App. 2014). In reviewing the denial of a directed verdict, the appellate court must view the evidence and all reasonable inferences in the light most favorable to the State, and find the case was properly submitted to the jury if there is sufficient direct and/or circumstantial evidence reasonably tending to prove guilt. State v. Lane, 410 S.C. 505, 765 S.E.2d 557, 558 (2014); State v. Lynch, 2015 WL 1237248, \*7 (S.C. Ct. App., filed March 18, 2015) (same); Phillips, 767 S.E.2d at 448 (same) "Unless there is a total failure of competent evidence as to the charges alleged, refusal by the trial judge to direct a verdict of acquittal is not error." State v. Arnold, 361 S.C. 386, 605 S.E.2d 529, 531 (2004); State v. Bennett, 408 S.C. 302, 758 S.E.2d 743, 745 (Ct.

App. 2014) (same).

Direct evidence is based on personal knowledge or observation, and immediately establishes the fact to be proved, while circumstantial evidence is proof of a chain of facts and circumstances from which the jury may infer the existence of a separate fact. Phillips, 767 S.E.2d at 448 (citations omitted). If the State relies **exclusively** on circumstantial evidence to prove guilt, that evidence must be “substantial” to justify denying a directed verdict motion. *Id.*

In this case, the State presented the following evidence:

1. NPLEX records documented numerous purchases of pseudoephedrine by Appellant and her co-defendants at multiple pharmacies between January and December 2011. (State’s Exhibits 1-40; R., pp. 222-398);
2. Co-defendant Rebecca Crisp testified she gave all the Sudafed she purchased during that time to another co-defendant who lived in the home with Appellant and Mealor, she saw methamphetamine used there, as well as plastic bottles and batteries with the labels peeled off there, and she detected a “toxic” smell there a few times. (TT, pp. 138-147; R., pp. 36-45);
3. Co-defendant Steven Hurley testified he purchased Sudafed for Appellant, who told him the legal limits he could purchase, and gave one-half of what he purchased in 2011 to Appellant in exchange for methamphetamine. (TT, pp. 213-216; R., pp. 66-69);
4. Co-defendant Kelley McCall testified she gave her 2011 Sudafed purchases to Appellant and Mealor, and a few days later they gave her a bag of methamphetamine; Appellant told her they could make methamphetamine cheaper and cleaner than what they could buy on the street; she saw many plastic bottles where Appellant lived, and Appellant said they could feel expand better than glass bottles; and when she noticed a strong odor in the home, Appellant told her the less she knew, the better. (TT, pp. 241-252; R., pp. 70-81);
5. Co-defendant Angela Armstrong testified she purchased 12.81 grams of Sudafed in 2011, gave all but .77 grams to Appellant and Mealor, and several days later, she received methamphetamine in return; Appellant and Mealor told her they were making methamphetamine, and said they could

make it cheaper and better. (TT, pp. 275-280, 294-296; R., pp. 82-87, 88-90);

6. Co-defendant Melissa Wardlaw testified she gave one-half of the Sudafed she purchased in 2011 to Mealor, who gave her the money to buy it and she kept the change; she knew other people were also buying it for him, and she saw Appellant with Sudafed at times; she knew Mealor was making methamphetamine; she saw him purchase ether and batteries; and she heard Appellant and Mealor talking about cooking methamphetamine and saying they could do it.<sup>4</sup> (TT, pp. 312-331, R., pp. 91-110).

7. Co-defendant Thomas Rooney testified he gave at least two boxes of his 2011 Sudafed purchases to Appellant and Mealor, in exchange for methamphetamine and money; he saw Appellant and Mealor use the shake and bake method to make methamphetamine in their bedroom “quite a few” times; he saw plastic bottles, big bottles of Coleman fuel, and cut open batteries at the home; and he smelled a strong ammonia type smell in the home when they were making the methamphetamine. (TT, pp. 361-371; R., pp. 111-121);

8. Co-defendant Billy Miller testified he gave all his 2011 Sudafed purchases to Appellant and Mealor in exchange for methamphetamine, and they told him they were making methamphetamine. (TT, pp. 384-397; R., pp. 122-133);

9. Co-defendant Lauren Summerall testified she and her husband purchased Sudafed for Appellant and Mealor in 2011 in exchange for money and methamphetamine, and they knew Appellant and Mealor were making methamphetamine with the Sudafed they provided. (TT, pp. 393-397; R., pp.129-133 );

10. Co-defendant Michael Hayes testified he gave all of his 2011 Sudafed purchases to Mealor in exchange for methamphetamine, which he picked up a few days after he provided the Sudafed. (TT, pp. 407-414; R., pp. 134-141);

11. Co-defendant Amanda Hurley testified Appellant and Mealor gave her and her husband money to purchase Sudafed in 2011, and they gave

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<sup>4</sup>Wardlaw originally told law enforcement she saw Mealor cooking methamphetamine using the shake and bake method several times after people gave him pseudoephedrine, and he purchased other ingredients he needed from the hardware store. At trial, she claimed she lied to law enforcement because she was mad at Appellant and Mealor. When confronted with specific discrepancies, however, Wardlaw’s memory conveniently got hazy regarding which parts of her earlier statement were lies. (TT, pp. 316-328; R., pp. 95-107).

about one-half of their 2011 Sudafed purchases to Appellant and Mealor. (TT, pp. 516-521; R., pp. 183-188).

12. In addition to the pseudoephedrine they received from the co-defendants, Appellant and Mealor each purchased over sixty-five grams of pseudoephedrine in 2011. (State's Exhibits 1 [Mealor] and 2 [Greenfield]; R., pp. 222, 227); and

13. Capt. Brooks testified pseudoephedrine, ether, Coleman fuel and lithium (from cut open batteries) are used in the shake and bake method of making methamphetamine; plastic bottles are used rather than glass bottles because the plastic expands more the person can feel when the pressure builds, and they are less likely to explode so they are generally safer; methamphetamine manufacturers use other people to purchase pseudoephedrine for them in order to avoid the legal limitations (smurfing); based on his training and experience, the yield rates of pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine are from 40% to 92%; bottles used in the shake and bake method are easy to clean or discard so they are very portable for use as a methamphetamine lab; and the manufacturing process creates a very strong ammonia smell (TT, pp. 439-462; R., pp. 158-181).

Thus, there was both direct and substantial circumstantial evidence Appellant and Mealor manufactured methamphetamine from pseudoephedrine they personally purchased and/or received from the co-defendants in 2011.

Capt. Brooks testified the generally accepted yield rates range from 40% to 92% pseudoephedrine to methamphetamine. As discussed above in Issue I, the federal courts use a 50% yield rate to calculate the appropriate base offense level for sentencing purposes in manufacturing methamphetamine cases, which was based on data compiled by the DEA, and is well within the range given by Capt. Brooks. Even expert disagreements about yield rates do not make Capt. Brooks' testimony mere speculation. See Martin, 438 F.3d at 636 (differences of opinion in the scientific community about yield rates did not render the 50% yield rate adopted by the Sentencing Commission arbitrary and capricious).

The evidence, including NPLEX records and testimony, revealed Appellant received and/or purchased 248.4 grams pseudoephedrine in 2011.<sup>5</sup> The following chart indicates how many grams of methamphetamine could be produced from that amount of pseudoephedrine, using yield rates ranging from 40% to 90%:

Pseud.	<u>40%</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>70%</u>	<u>80%</u>	<u>90%</u>
<b>248.4</b>	99.36	124.2	149.04	173.88	198.72	223.56

Assuming for argument purposes the pseudoephedrine Appellant personally purchased was used for medicinal purposes, the following chart shows the grams of methamphetamine that could be produced just from the pseudoephedrine Appellant received from the co-defendants:

Pseud.	<u>40%</u>	<u>50%</u>	<u>60%</u>	<u>70%</u>	<u>80%</u>	<u>90%</u>
<b>179.76</b>	71.904	89.88	107.856	125.832	143.808	161.784

Under either scenario, the **minimum** methamphetamine yield far exceeded 28 grams.<sup>6</sup>

Appellant's contention a directed verdict was warranted because law enforcement did not find or seize a methamphetamine lab, or a large stash of pseudoephedrine, from Appellant is unavailing. As set forth above, there was direct testimony Appellant and Mealor manufactured methamphetamine in their home, co-defendants saw items in their home that are commonly associated with manufacturing methamphetamine (plastic

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<sup>5</sup>Appellant contends the totals were speculative because some co-defendants used the pseudoephedrine for medicinal purposes; however, the State only attributed to Appellant the amounts each co-defendant testified they gave to her.

<sup>6</sup>Appellant's argument regarding potentially lengthy investigations is a red-herring. The investigation in this case lasted one year, which is certainly reasonable for an investigation into a methamphetamine manufacturing conspiracy.

bottles and cut open lithium batteries), and some people detected a strong ammonia-like odor in the home.

Further, the evidence established Appellant and Meador found out in November 2011 they were being investigated, but they were not arrested until June 2012, and methamphetamine labs, particularly the shake and bake version, are very portable and easily discarded. (TT, pp. 450-451, R., pp. 169-170). Therefore, it is reasonably inferable Appellant and Meador were much more careful after November 2011, and promptly discarded any evidence of methamphetamine manufacturing in their home.

There was ample direct and circumstantial evidence from which the jury could find beyond a reasonable doubt Appellant conspired with others and manufactured in excess of 28 grams methamphetamine in 2011. Therefore, the circuit court properly submitted the case to the jury, and its ruling should be affirmed.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the foregoing, Respondent submits Appellant's conviction and sentence should be affirmed.

ALAN WILSON  
Attorney General

DEBORAH R.J. SHUPE  
Senior Assistant Deputy Attorney General  
SC Bar No. 5098

W. WALTER WILKINS  
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

for By:   
DEBORAH R.J. SHUPE

Office of Attorney General  
Post Office Box 11549  
Columbia, SC 29211  
(803) 734-3727

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The Honorable Robin B. Stilwell, Circuit Court Judge  
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THE STATE,

Respondent,

v.

CYNTHIA MANSELL GREENFIELD,

Appellant.

**CERTIFICATE OF COUNSEL**

The undersigned certifies that this Final Brief of Appellant complies with Rule 211(b), SCACR, and the August 13, 2007, order from the South Carolina Supreme Court entitled, "Interim Guidance Regarding Personal Data Identifiers and Other Sensitive Information in Appellate Court Filings."

ALAN WILSON  
Attorney General

DEBORAH R.J. SHUPE  
Senior Assistant Deputy Attorney General  
SC Bar No. 5098

W. WALTER WILKINS  
Solicitor, Thirteenth Judicial Circuit

By:   
DEBORAH R.J. SHUPE

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