

The South Carolina Court of Appeals

Dr. Kaoru Pridgen, Appellant,

v.

Colonial Family Practice, LLC; Varsity Family Care Partners, LLC; Family Care Partners d/b/a Family Care Partners Management, LLC; Dr. Clay Lowder; Thomas W. Watson; and Dr. Gary R. Katz, Respondents.

Appellate Case No. 2020-000067

ORDER

Appellant has filed a motion to seal the record on appeal in this case or in the alternative to seal certain portions of the record. Although there is no provision in the South Carolina Appellate Court Rules for sealing records in the appellate court, we have the power to control our own records. *See Ex parte Capital U-Drive-It, Inc.*, 369 S.C. 1, 12, 630 S.E.2d 464, 470 (2006). In *Ex parte Capital U-Drive-It*, the Supreme Court of South Carolina analyzed Rule 41.1(b), SCRCF, in deciding whether to seal or unseal a court record. 369 S.C. at 12, 630 S.E.2d at 470. Rule 41.1(b), SCRCF, requires a motion to seal to identify, with specificity, the documents or portions of documents for which sealing is considered necessary, to contain a non-confidential description of the documents, and to be accompanied by a separately sealed attachment labeled "Confidential Information to be submitted to Court in Connection with the Motion to Seal." Rule 41.1 also requires the moving party to state the reasons why sealing is necessary, explain why less drastic alternatives to sealing will not afford adequate protection, and address the following factors:

- (1) ensuring the parties' right to a fair trial or hearing;
- (2) the need for witness cooperation;
- (3) the reliance of the parties upon expectations of confidentiality of the proceeding;
- (4) the public or professional significance of the proceeding;
- (5) the perceived harm to the parties from

disclosure; (6) why alternatives other than sealing the documents are not available to protect legitimate private interests; and (7) why the public interest, including, but not limited to, the public health and safety, is best served by sealing the documents.

When ruling on a motion to seal, the court may also consider the public interest in the proceeding; the private or public status of the litigants and case generally; whether release would enhance the public's understanding of an important historical event; whether the public already has access to information contained in the records; whether a particular decision will sustain or offend the fundamental interests of public access, and any other relevant factors. *Ex parte Capital U-Drive-It, Inc.*, 369 S.C. at 12, 630 S.E.2d at 470 (2006).

Appellant's motion fails to fully address the factors listed above or to explain "why alternatives other than sealing the documents," such as redaction of the confidential financial information or personal identifiers, would not sufficiently protect legitimate privacy interests. *See* Rule 41.1. The motion to seal the record in its entirety is denied. The motion to seal certain portions of the record is denied without prejudice to Appellant's right to refile the motion to seal and provide the court with the information addressed above.


FOR THE COURT

Columbia, South Carolina

cc:

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