

UNPUBLISHED

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

No. 25-6196

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,

Plaintiff - Appellee,

v.

KENNETH WAYNE WATFORD, a/k/a Abdul Abrams,

Defendant - Appellant.

Appeal from the United States District Court for the District of Maryland, at Greenbelt.
Lydia Kay Griggsby, District Judge. (8:12-cr-00623-LKG-3; 8:24-cv-03293-LKG)

Submitted: April 28, 2026

Decided: April 30, 2026

Before WILKINSON and GREGORY, Circuit Judges, and TRAXLER, Senior Circuit
Judge.

Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

Kenneth Wayne Watford, Appellant Pro Se. David Christian Bornstein, Assistant United
States Attorney, OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, Baltimore, Maryland;
Elizabeth G. Wright, OFFICE OF THE UNITED STATES ATTORNEY, Greenbelt,
Maryland, for Appellee.

Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Kenneth Wayne Watford seeks to appeal the district court's order denying without prejudice his 28 U.S.C. § 2255 motion. The order is not appealable unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1)(B). A certificate of appealability will not issue absent "a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(2). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists could find the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong. *See Buck v. Davis*, 580 U.S. 100, 115-17 (2017). When the district court denies relief on procedural grounds, the prisoner must demonstrate both that the dispositive procedural ruling is debatable and that the motion states a debatable claim of the denial of a constitutional right. *Gonzalez v. Thaler*, 565 U.S. 134, 140-41 (2012) (citing *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)).

Limiting our review of the record to the issues raised in Watford's informal brief, we conclude that Watford has not made the requisite showing. *See* 4th Cir. R. 34(b); *see also Jackson v. Lightsey*, 775 F.3d 170, 177 (4th Cir. 2014) ("The informal brief is an important document; under Fourth Circuit rules, our review is limited to issues preserved in that brief."). Watford has also moved for appointment of counsel and for his case to be placed in abeyance pending the district court's expungement of state records. We deny Watford's pending motions, deny a certificate of appealability, and dismiss the appeal.

We dispense with oral argument because the facts and legal contentions are adequately presented in the materials before this court and argument would not aid the decisional process.

DISMISSED