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IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF NORTH CAROLINA

No. COA23-1086

Filed 21 May 2024

Durham County, No. 20 JT 88

IN THE MATTER OF: B.B.P.

Appeal by Respondent-Father from order entered 6 September 2023 by Judge Doretta L. Walker in Durham County District Court. Heard in the Court of Appeals 30 April 2024.

Senior Assistant County Attorney Keith T. Roberson for petitioner-appellee Durham County Department of Social Services.

N.C. Administrative Office of the Courts, by Guardian ad Litem Staff Attorney Brittany T. McKinney, for the Guardian ad Litem.

Jason R. Page for respondent-appellant father.

STADING, Judge.

In this appeal from an order terminating his parental rights to “Michael,”¹ Father challenges the trial court’s denial of a motion to continue the termination proceeding, certain findings of fact, the conclusions of law that four statutory grounds permitting termination exist, and the determination that it is in Michael’s best interests that Father’s parental rights be terminated. After careful review, we affirm.

¹ A pseudonym is used to protect the minor child’s identity. See N.C. R. App. P. 42.

I. Background

When Michael was born in June 2020 to Mother,² he tested positive for cocaine and opiates, and so he remained in the neonatal intensive care unit (NICU) of the Duke University Medical Center for some period after his birth. Soon after, the Durham County Department of Social Services (DSS) received a report that Michael was a substance-affected infant. In July 2020, DSS obtained non-secure custody of Michael and filed a petition alleging that he was a neglected and dependent juvenile. In the petition, DSS alleged, among other things, that Mother did not list a father on Michael's birth certificate and identified a person other than Father as Michael's putative father in response to DSS inquiries. Mother's ongoing struggles with substance abuse, mental health, and domestic violence were noted, along with her failure to engage in court-ordered services, and her choice to have limited contact with Michael while the infant was hospitalized. Following hearings in April 2021, the trial court entered an order on 19 July 2021 adjudicating Michael a neglected and dependent juvenile and ordering the putative father identified by Mother to submit to a paternity test. As of a review hearing held in July 2021, Michael remained in DSS custody in a placement with a foster family.

² Mother's parental rights to Michael were also terminated, but she is not a party to this appeal, and for that reason, the factual and procedural summary presented here focuses primarily on matters pertaining to Father.

At the next permanency planning hearing on 9 September 2021, the trial court found that the putative father had not maintained contact with DSS or completed a paternity test, and that DSS had been unable to contact Mother since 26 August 2020. The trial court changed the primary permanent plan for Michael to adoption with a secondary plan of guardianship. At the time of subsequent permanency planning hearings held on 21 March and 8 September 2022, the putative father still had not completed a paternity test, and Mother was still not in communication with DSS. The trial court thus found that Mother had made no progress toward the services goals.³ On 20 September 2022, DSS petitioned for termination of parental rights alleging the existence of these grounds as to Mother: neglect, failure to make reasonable progress, failure to pay a reasonable portion of support, and willful abandonment. The petition alleged these grounds as to the putative father: neglect, failure to make reasonable progress, failure to pay a reasonable portion of support, willful abandonment, and failure to establish paternity. And “[a]s to the Unknown Father,” the petition alleged statutory grounds of neglect, failure to pay a reasonable portion of support, willful abandonment, and failure to establish paternity.

³ In the order entered following the March 2022 permanency planning hearing, the trial court noted that Mother had not been in contact with DSS since 29 September 2020. In the order entered following the September 2022 permanency planning hearing, the trial court found that a DSS social worker was able to obtain an address for Mother and send a certified letter for which Mother signed, yet Mother still had not contacted DSS.

The pleading stated that other than the putative father, “[n]o other males have been identified as a possible Father for the child.” Yet, Father appeared at a prehearing conference on 16 March 2023⁴ and was identified as Michael’s “parent” in the resulting order filed the next day. In an order entered on 28 March 2023, the trial court stated that the mother identified Father as Michael’s father on 27 September 2022 and that he had agreed to take a paternity test. The trial court also authorized notice of the termination of parental rights petition to the “Unknown Father” by publication. The record further reflects that Father was served with the petition for termination of parental rights on 2 May 2023. A prehearing report prepared by DSS before the 15 May 2023 hearing on the termination of parental rights states that Father’s “paternity was established in December 2022.”

On 15 May 2023, just before the termination hearing began, Father’s counsel requested a continuance and asked the trial court to conduct a permanency planning hearing rather than the scheduled hearing on the termination petition. The trial court noted that it was the third setting of the termination hearing. Counsel for DSS, while agreeing that Father had never appeared in the matter, urged that the matter move forward even so. Counsel for the guardian ad litem (GAL) expressed concern about proceeding “without hearing from the father first,” and Father’s counsel did not

⁴ The pretrial order states in one location that the hearing took place on 16 March 2022 but the year is plainly a scrivener’s error as reflected by use of the correct year—2023—in the order’s header, signature section, and file stamp.

have the GAL's report. The trial court, after confirming that DSS had served Father with the termination petition and that Michael had been in DSS custody for three years, denied Father's motion to continue.

At the hearing on the petition which then ensued, Father was called by DSS and testified to the following facts: (1) when Mother was pregnant with Michael, she told him that he was the father; (2) Father then asked for "a DNA test," but when Mother did not return his telephone calls, he did not take further steps to contact her; (3) Father learned of Michael's birth through family and friends and also heard that Mother was looking for a placement for Michael to prevent DSS from placing the infant in foster care; (4) Father called DSS several times at that point to report that he might be the child's father, leaving his contact information, but did not hear back from DSS; (5) Father did not further investigate his potential paternity of Michael until being contacted by DSS in September 2022, submitting to a DNA test, and receiving the results in December 2022; and (6) at which point he contacted DSS about gaining custody of Michael and was told "to be patient." In response to questioning by the trial court, Father acknowledged finding out about Michael's birth, hospitalization, involvement with DSS, and other matters through Father's nephew, who was also apparently the cousin of the man initially named as Michael's putative father. Father also confirmed that throughout the three years of Michael's life he knew that a child in DSS custody "might be mine."

The trial court also heard testimony from a DSS social worker who stated that neither Mother nor Father had any contact with Michael once he entered DSS custody as an infant and that neither had provided any financial support or sent gift, cards, or other items for Michael to DSS or the foster family. The social worker expressed concern that Father's address as of October 2022 appeared to the same address on record for Mother. Father admitted at the time that he and Mother were residing together, and the social worker explained that this living arrangement would present a problem for Father seeking custody given that Mother was prohibited from having contact with Michael. When the social worker called Father in December 2022 to advise him of the paternity test results, Father stated that Mother had lived with him before Michael's birth, but she had moved out shortly after becoming pregnant.

In an order entered 6 September 2023, the trial court concluded that four statutory grounds existed to terminate Father's parental rights: neglect, willful failure to pay child support, abandonment, and failure to establish paternity. The trial court then determined that it was in Michael's best interests to terminate Father's parental rights. Father timely appealed from the trial court's subsequent adjudication and disposition order.

II. Analysis

Father argues that the trial court abused its discretion in denying his motion to continue, made findings of fact that are not supported by the evidence, erred in concluding that the four bases permitting the termination of parental rights existed,

and abused its discretion in determining that terminating his parental rights was in Michael's best interests. For the reasons below, we affirm the termination order.

A. Standards of Review

Termination of parental rights proceedings consist of two parts: if a court adjudicates the existence of one or more statutory grounds permitting termination, it then moves to a disposition phase in which the trial court considers a list of statutory factors, makes written findings about those that are relevant, and ultimately determines in its discretion whether termination of parental rights would be in the juvenile's best interests. *In re K.N.*, 373 N.C. 274, 277–78, 837 S.E.2d 861, 864–65 (2020) (citations omitted). We review adjudicatory findings of fact to determine whether they are supported by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence, and whether they in turn support the trial court's conclusions of law of the existence of statutory grounds for termination. *Id.* at 278, 837 S.E.2d at 865. Findings not challenged by the appellant are deemed to be properly supported and are treated as binding on appeal. *In re Z.L.W.*, 372 N.C. 432, 437, 831 S.E.2d 62, 65 (2019). The trial court's conclusions of law are reviewed *de novo*. *In re K.N.*, 373 N.C. at 278, 837 S.E.2d at 865. The trial court's determination of a juvenile's best interest at the dispositional phase is reviewed for only for abuse of discretion which is evidenced by a ruling that is "manifestly unsupported by reason or is so arbitrary that it could not have been the result of a reasoned decision." *State v. Hennis*, 323 N.C. 279, 285, 372 S.E.2d 523,

527 (1988). A trial court’s denial of a motion to continue is also reviewed for abuse of discretion. *In re J.E.*, 377 N.C. 285, 291, 856 S.E.2d 818, 822 (2021).

B. Denial of Motion to Continue

Father’s first argument is that the district “court abused its discretion by denying [his] motion to continue the termination of parental rights hearing to give him the opportunity to have a permanency planning hearing.” Father’s contention on this point is primarily based on his assertion that he only “determined” and “confirmed” that he was Michael’s father in January 2023⁵ and was not served with the termination petition until 2 May 2023. As Father concedes, however, while a trial court *may* continue a termination of parental rights hearing in order to “receive additional evidence . . . or other information needed in the best interests of the juvenile. . . ., *continuances shall be granted only in extraordinary circumstances when necessary for the proper administration of justice or in the best interests of the juvenile.*” N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-803 (2023) (emphasis added). “Since continuances are not favored, motions to continue ‘ought not to be granted unless the reasons therefore are fully established.’” *In re D.J.*, 378 N.C. 565, 570, 862 S.E.2d 766, 770 (2021) (quoting *State v. Gibson*, 229 N.C. 497, 501, 50 S.E.2d 520 (1948)); *see also In re J.E.*, 377 N.C. at 291, 856 S.E.2d at 822. Moreover, to prevail in his request for relief,

⁵ A social worker testified that she informed Father of the paternity test results in December 2022, and the DSS court report prepared for the termination hearing states that Father’s “paternity was established in December 2022.”

Father acknowledges that he must not only establish that the trial court abused its discretion, but also show that he suffered prejudice as a result. *In re D.J.*, 378 N.C. at 569, 862 S.E.2d at 770.

In support of the motion to continue, counsel for Father argued that “to move forward on a [termination of parental rights], without giving [Father] the opportunity to have a permanency planning hearing, I think is not in the best interest[s] of the child.” When it declined to continue the hearing, the trial court likewise focused on Michael’s best interests, specifically noting as reasons for its denial that the termination hearing had been set three times, Michael had been in DSS custody for almost three years, and Michael deserved permanency. Those remarks indicate that the trial court focused on Michael’s best interests—the polar star in juvenile matters.⁶ Thus, we cannot agree with Father’s argument that the trial court’s exercise of its discretion was “manifestly unsupported by reason or . . . so arbitrary that it could not have been the result of a reasoned decision.” *In re J.E.*, 377 N.C. at 291, 856 S.E.2d at 822 (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). Moreover, neither Father nor the record establishes prejudice sufficient to disturb the trial court’s order. Father’s own testimony at the later adjudication hearing revealed that he was aware before Michael’s birth in June 2020 that he might be the father and knew that Michael was placed in DSS custody shortly after he was born. Even so, Father failed to follow

⁶ See, e.g., *In re T.H.T.*, 362 N.C. 446, 450, 665 S.E.2d 54, 57 (2008) (affirming that the child’s best interests constitute “the ‘polar star’ of the North Carolina Juvenile Code”).

through with establishing paternity until he was contacted by DSS in September 2022. The trial court acted properly within its discretion in denying Father's motion for a continuance.

C. Challenged Findings of Fact

Father next contends that findings of fact 22, 24, 25, 28, 30, and 31 are not supported by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence as they apply to him. The findings of fact at issue are:

22. The Respondent parents' lack of involvement with the juvenile while hospitalized led to the removal of the juvenile from the home and the basis for the adjudication in the underlying files, all of which rendered the parents incapable of providing proper care and supervision of the juvenile, and abandonment of the juvenile.

...

24. That at the time of this termination hearing, the Petitioner demonstrated by and through the evidence presented that conditions rising to the level of neglect existed during the pendency of the termination action in that the child lived in an environment injurious and that the parents did not provide proper care or supervision in that there continued to be significant substance abuse and abandonment in the home.

25. There is a likelihood of repetition of neglect if the juvenile was returned to the home of the Respondents based upon the findings of fact herein and the underlying permanency planning orders relied upon and incorporated herein.

...

28. When [Michael] was born the child was placed with the Maternal Aunt because [] Mother did not come forward to even give the child a name on his birth certificate. DSS was searching for possible placements. During this time, [Father] was aware that he had a sexual relationship with [] Mother, [Mother] was pregnant, and he was told by [Mother] that he was the father of her unborn child while she was pregnant. Despite this information, [Father] made no reasonable efforts to locate the child and become a part of the child's life. For over two years, [Father] had no contact with this child. [Father] testified that he wants [Michael] to be in his care.

...

30. Respondents' failure to adequately and timely address the issues that led to the removal of the juvenile from the home constitutes neglect. That failure to adequately and timely address the neglectful behaviors[] renders the Respondents incapable of providing adequate care and supervision of the juvenile[]. The probability that the neglect will be repeated and said incapability will continue in the future is high given the failure of the Respondents to address the issues.

31. The Respondents have demonstrated a settled pattern of neglect and abandonment of the juvenile, and this pattern is likely to continue into the foreseeable future. The [c]ourt finds there is a reasonable probability that it is a near certainty that such neglect would be continued and repeated if the juvenile was to be returned to the care, custody, or control of the Respondents.

Father's dispute with these findings rests on two assertions. First, that because his identity as the natural father of Michael was not confirmed until after the termination of parental rights petition was filed, he was not involved in any permanency planning hearings, did not play a role in the reasons Michael was placed

in DSS custody, and was not afforded an opportunity to show the trial court that he could provide adequate care for Michael. And second, that Father made reasonable efforts to locate Michael and become part of his life when he asked Mother for a paternity test, called her until her number changed, and called DSS several times.

“In the context of termination of parental rights proceedings, the proper inquiry is often fact-dependent and the [district] court, as a fact-finding court, is in the best position to determine the credibility of the witnesses before it and make findings of fact.” *In re S.R.*, 384 N.C. 516, 517, 886 S.E.2d 166, 169 (2023) (citation omitted). Thus, the trial court “determines the weight to be given the testimony and the reasonable inferences to be drawn therefrom. If a different inference may be drawn from the evidence, the [district] court alone determines which inferences to draw and which to reject.” *In re M.M.*, 272 N.C. App. 55, 69, 845 S.E.2d 888, 898 (2020) (citation and internal quotation marks omitted). Likewise, findings of fact that are “supported by clear, cogent, and convincing evidence [are] deemed conclusive even if the record contains evidence that would support . . . contrary finding[s].” *In re B.O.A.*, 372 N.C. 372, 379, 831 S.E.2d 305, 310 (2019) (citation omitted)

The timing of the confirmation of Father’s paternity and his alleged earlier efforts to pursue his possible paternity were central issues at the termination hearing. The trial court considered the relevant testimony on them, as reflected in unchallenged—and therefore binding, *see In re Z.L.W.*, 372 N.C. at 437, 831 S.E.2d at 65—finding of fact 35:

35. [Father] became aware early on in the mother's pregnancy that he could be the father of her unborn child. [Father] testified that he told [Mother] that they would need to have a paternity test. [Mother] told him when she was pregnant that he was the father and he requested a DNA test, he testified at the hearing that she told him two to three additional times that he was the father and then he did not hear from her again; that his nephew kept him abreast of what was happening with the child; that despite having other children that had been in DSS's custody/jurisdiction, [Father] did not go to DSS, but only supposedly called the front desk and spoke to an unknown person; and that [Father] had kept in contact with [Mother's] father and knew his address and did not inquire as to the minor child. [Father] took no action for almost three years to explore his paternity and build a relationship with his child despite knowing that the child could be his. He was not added as a party until recently and was therefore not ordered to participate in services by this court.

As for finding of fact 28, Father argues that he made reasonable efforts to locate Michael but after they failed, he believed that he was not Michael's father. At trial, Father testified that he asked Mother for a DNA test, called her multiple times without a response, called DSS several times and left his contact information, but took no further steps to pursue paternity until he was contacted by DSS almost two years later. All the while knowing that Michael had been born and DSS was seeking a placement for the child. The DSS social worker testified that they did not learn that Father was a potential father for Michael until she spoke to Mother in September 2022. She also reported that Father had been unable to recall to whom he spoke or left information with at DSS when he called to report his possible paternity. The trial

court found that Father “took no action for almost three years to explore his paternity and build a relationship with his child despite knowing that the child could be his.” It then concluded that those actions did not amount to “reasonable efforts” to pursue the question of paternity. Those weight and credibility determinations were for the trial court alone, *see In re S.R.*, 384 N.C. at 517, 886 S.E.2d at 169, and clear, cogent, and convincing evidence in the form of testimony from Father and the social worker support them. *See In re B.O.A.*, 372 N.C. at 379, 831 S.E.2d at 310.

Similarly, regarding findings of fact 22, 24, 25, 30, and 31, the record provides reasonable inferences drawn from the evidence before the trial court at the termination hearing. Along with the testimony recounted above, Father testified that he knew about Michael’s birth, hospitalization, and involvement with DSS in real time. The file before the trial court further showed that Michael was adjudicated a dependent and neglected juvenile and had remained in DSS custody and a foster placement for years because no parent was available to appropriately care for him. Taken together with the remaining unchallenged findings of fact, this evidence supports the trial court’s inference that Father’s decision not to undertake reasonable efforts to confirm his paternity at or near the time of Michael’s birth contributed to Michael being taken into DSS custody. The same evidence shows that Father’s own inaction deprived him of the opportunity to demonstrate his ability to parent Michael. “[W]hich inferences to draw and which to reject” were for “the [district] court alone,” and we may not disturb them. *See In re M.M.*, 272 N.C. App. at 69, 845 S.E.2d at 898

(citation and internal quotation marks omitted). The trial court considers the best interest of the child in making their custody determination—regardless of a parent’s initial belief about their parental status. Father’s challenges to the trial court’s findings of fact 22, 24, 25, 30, and 31 are insufficient to warrant a disturbance of the trial court’s order.

D. Existence of a Ground for Termination

Father also challenges the trial court’s conclusions of law about four statutory bases permitting termination of his parental rights. The existence of any single ground is sufficient to support termination of parental rights, *see In re E.H.P.*, 372 N.C. 388, 395, 831 S.E.2d 49, 53–54 (2019). Because we hold the trial court’s conclusion about neglect is supported by the findings of fact, we need not address Father’s challenges to the other three grounds permitting termination.

As to the ground of neglect, Father emphasizes that he had not neglected Michael and asserts that the trial court’s findings of fact did not support a conclusion that Michael would likely be neglected in the future if placed in Father’s care. Under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-1111(a)(1), parental rights may be terminated based on a conclusion that “[t]he parent has . . . neglected the juvenile” within the meaning of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-101(15). N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-1111(a)(1) (2023). In turn, a neglected juvenile is defined as a juvenile “whose parent, guardian, custodian, or caretaker . . . [d]oes not provide proper care, supervision, or discipline; . . . [or c]reates or allows to be created a living environment that is injurious to the juvenile’s welfare.”

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-101(15) (2023). Michael was adjudicated a dependent and neglected juvenile by order entered on 19 July 2021. If a child has been outside the care of a respondent-parent for an extended time, the existence of the basis of neglect must rest on findings of fact sufficient to show that, *at the time of the termination of parental rights proceeding*, both past neglect and *a likelihood of future neglect* could be determined. *In re J.M.J.-J.*, 374 N.C. 553, 556, 843 S.E.2d 94, 99 (2020). Evidence of neglect, among other things, “can include the total failure to provide love, support, affection, and personal contact.” *In re C.L.S.*, 245 N.C. App. 75, 78, 781 S.E.2d 680, 682 (citation omitted), *affirmed*, 369 N.C. 58, 791 S.E.2d 457 (2016). Moreover, “[i]n determining whether a child is neglected, the determinative factors are the circumstances and conditions surrounding the child, not the fault or culpability of the parent.” *In re Montgomery*, 311 N.C. 101, 109, 316 S.E.2d 246, 252 (1984). “It is therefore not necessary that the parent whose rights are subject to termination be responsible for the prior adjudication of neglect.” *In re J.M.J.-J.*, 374 N.C. at 565, 843 S.E.2d at 104.

The trial court made findings of fact supported by competent evidence as to the neglect and dependency of Michael in the adjudication portion of the termination order. Namely, that Michael tested positive for cocaine and opiates at birth; Mother admitted using heroin every day during her pregnancy even once she learned of the pregnancy; Michael remained hospitalized for a period after his birth to manage his drug withdrawal symptoms; and neither Mother nor Michael’s then unknown father

could offer an appropriate home or placement for the child. Thus, Michael was adjudicated a neglected and dependent juvenile where no parent provided proper care or supervision. As the trial court summarized in finding of fact 35, Father “took no action for almost three years to explore his paternity and build a relationship with his child despite knowing that the child could be his.” Even upon submitting to DNA testing in in November 2022 and confirming that he was Michael’s biological father in December 2022, Father did not, until the date of the termination hearing in May 2023, undertake any efforts to be “part of [Michael’s] life,” financially support the child, or “build a relationship with” Michael.

In a termination of parental rights hearing, the trial court has “the responsibility to pass upon the credibility of the witnesses and the weight to be given their testimony and the reasonable inferences to be drawn therefrom.” *In re D.L.W.*, 368 N.C. 835, 844, 788 S.E.2d 162, 167–68 (2016) (citation, internal quotation marks, and brackets omitted). Here, the trial court, in its role as the finder of fact, made written findings that one of the primary reasons Michael went into DSS custody was that no parent was willing or able to provide care for him beginning at his birth. And that for almost three years Father did not meaningfully pursue the question of paternity by following up his message to DSS, offering himself as a potential placement for the child, making any formal inquiries into Michael’s welfare, taking any court action regarding custody, or extending any emotional or financial support to the child. It was reasonable for the trial court to infer that Father, having made

limited efforts to investigate his possible paternity when he knew Michael was about to be placed in foster care and then having taken *no action* in regard to Michael until being contacted by DSS years later, would likely “not provide proper care, supervision, or discipline” to Michael if he were placed in Father’s care. See N.C. Gen. Stat. at 69, 845 S.E.2d at 898. We hold that the trial court’s findings of fact are sufficient to support its conclusion of law that there was a likelihood of future neglect of Michael. Therefore, we affirm the trial court’s determination that at least one ground existed to permit the termination of Father’s parental rights to Michael.

E. Dispositional Determination

Father also argues that the trial court abused its discretion in determining that termination of his parental rights would be in Michael’s best interests. In evaluating whether termination of parental rights is in the best interests of the child,

the court shall consider the following criteria and make written findings regarding the following that are relevant:

- (1) The age of the juvenile.
- (2) The likelihood of adoption of the juvenile.
- (3) Whether the termination of parental rights will aid in the accomplishment of the permanent plan for the juvenile.
- (4) The bond between the juvenile and the parent.
- (5) The quality of the relationship between the juvenile and the proposed adoptive parent, guardian, custodian, or other permanent placement.
- (6) Any relevant consideration.

N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-1110(a) (2023). Our Supreme Court has examined the language in this statute directing that “the court *shall consider* the following criteria and *make*

written findings regarding the following *that are relevant*” and held that while a district “court must *consider* all of the factors,” written findings are only required for relevant factors. *In re A.U.D.*, 373 N.C. 3, 6, 832 S.E.2d 698, 700, 702 (2019). Father argues that “the court should have considered [his] actions after learning that he was Michael’s father, his desire to be involved in Michael’s life, and procedures used to terminate [his] parental rights two weeks after service of process” and made written findings under the sixth, catchall statutory factor—“[a]ny relevant consideration.”

In the disposition portion of the termination order, the trial court specifically listed all statutory criteria that it considered before making nine detailed findings of fact. As discussed above, the trial court dealt with the concern about the short time between service and the hearing in resolving the motion to continue. We perceive no reason why the trial court would be required to address that issue again at the dispositional stage. With respect to Father’s actions after confirming paternity and his desire to be a parent to Michael, the lack of a finding of fact to this effect does not demonstrate that the trial court failed to consider such evidence; it only indicates that the trial court did not find those actions “relevant.” *See* N.C. Gen. Stat. § 7B-1110(a)(6). In any event, Father has not established that the trial court’s decision not to make additional findings on portions of his testimony was “manifestly unsupported by reason or . . . so arbitrary that it could not have been the result of a reasoned decision.” *In re Z.L.W.*, 372 N.C. at 435, 831 S.E.2d at 64 (citation and

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internal quotation marks omitted). Since the trial court considered the requisite statutory factors, we discern no abuse of discretion. *Id.*

III. Conclusion

For the reasons above, we affirm the trial court's order terminating Father's parental rights.

AFFIRMED.

Chief Judge DILLON and Judge GRIFFIN concur.

Report per Rule 30(e).