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IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF NORTH CAROLINA

No. COA25-834

Filed 16 September 2026

Pitt County, Nos. 22CR305784-730, 24CR000099-730, 24CR000100-730

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

v.

HEPH'ZI-BAH BEULAH YIZRAYL

Appeal by defendant from judgment entered 10 April 2024 by Judge Marvin K. Blount III in Pitt County Superior Court. Heard in the Court of Appeals 27 August 2026.

Appellate Defender Glenn Gerding, by Assistant Appellate Defender David S. Hallen, for Defendant.

Attorney General Jeff Jackson, by Special Deputy Attorney General Terence Steed, for the State.

ARROWOOD, Judge.

Heph'zi-Bah Beulah Yizrayl ("defendant") appeals from judgment entered after jury trial where he was convicted on fifteen counts of failure to register as a sex offender. For the following reasons, we discern no error and affirm the judgment.

I. Introduction

On 31 January 2001, defendant was convicted of Attempted Second-Degree Rape in Pitt County and sentenced to a term of 129 to 164 months' imprisonment, and he was therefore subject to sex offender registration requirements upon release. During his sentence, defendant legally changed his name from Terrence Dwayne Wooden. Following his release in 2013, defendant provided the name Terrence Dwayne Wooden on the first required Sex Offender Change of Information form and did not disclose any other name on at least nine subsequent Change of Information forms. He also signed two Offender Acknowledgement forms under his previous legal name despite acknowledging therein his duty to report his name change.

On 14 September 2022, defendant was pulled over while driving for not having tags displayed on his vehicle. He refused to provide a drivers' license for about ten minutes while the police determined that the vehicle's registration was under the last name Yizrayl. Defendant disclosed his legal last name following his arrest for resist, delay, and obstruction. Defendant had two North Carolina drivers' licenses, one for each name.

On 8 April 2024, defendant was tried on fifteen counts of failure to register as a sex offender. Tania Harris ("Ms. Harris"), manager of the Pitt County sex offender registry, testified that defendant did not provide his amended birth certificate until late 2022. She testified that defendant had come to the office between six and ten times since she began her employment in 2019 and that she did not know his name was anything other than Terrence Wooden. She explained that registrants are

required by law to visit the office and report a name change within three days.

Defendant's counsel moved to dismiss the charges following the State's evidence and at the close of all evidence. The jury found him guilty on all charges. Defendant gave oral and written notice of appeal following sentencing on 10 April 2024.

II. Discussion

Defendant argues that the trial court erred by denying his motion to dismiss because the State failed to present substantial evidence of an intent to deceive. The trial court's denial of a motion to dismiss is reviewed *de novo*. *State v. Smith*, 186 N.C. App. 57, 62 (2007) (citing *State v. McKinnon*, 306 N.C. 288, 298 (1982)). In reviewing a trial court's denial of a motion to dismiss, we ask whether "substantial evidence" (1) supports "each essential element of the crime" and (2) shows "that the defendant is the perpetrator." *State v. Golder*, 374 N.C. 238, 249 (2020) (quoting *State v. Winkler*, 368 N.C. 572, 574 (2015)). Substantial evidence is the "amount . . . necessary to persuade a rational juror to accept a conclusion." *Id.* We view the evidence "in the light most favorable to the State," giving it "every reasonable intendment and every reasonable inference to be drawn therefrom." *Id.* "Contradictions and discrepancies in the evidence are for the jury to decide." *State v. Wynn*, 276 N.C. App. 411, 416 (2021). On a motion to dismiss, "[i]f the evidence presented is circumstantial, the court must consider whether a reasonable inference of defendant's guilt may be drawn from the circumstances." *State v. Fritsch*, 351 N.C.

373, 379 (2000) (quoting *State v. Barnes*, 334 N.C. 67, 75 (1993)). Intent “must ordinarily be proved by circumstances from which it may be inferred.” *State v. Bell*, 285 N.C. 746, 750 (1974).

Our sex offender registry statutes address the circumstances under which an individual is to provide an update to his registration information:

If a person required to register changes his or her name pursuant to Chapter 101 of the General Statutes or by any other method, then the person shall, within three business days, report in person to the sheriff of the county with whom the person registered to provide the name change to the sheriff. The sheriff shall immediately forward this information to the Department of Public Safety.

N.C.G.S. § 14-208.9(f). Registrants are prohibited from willfully forging or submitting registration information “under false pretenses.” N.C.G.S. § 14-208.11(a)(4). Willfulness requires acting “purposely and deliberately in violation of law.” *State v. Lamp*, 383 N.C. 562, 570–71 (2022) (quoting *State v. Arnold*, 264 N.C. 348, 349 (1965) (per curiam)). Additionally, “[f]alse pretense occurs when one makes an untrue representation to another that is calculated and intended to deceive.” *Id.* (quoting *State v. Parks*, 147 N.C. App. 485, 489 (2001)).

Defendant legally changed his name years before his sentence ended in 2013, and upon his release, he was required to provide notice of the new name to the sheriff, but he did not provide this notice until late 2022. Ms. Harris testified that he provided her office only the name Terrence Wooden and signed all documents with this name. When initially registering upon his 2013 release, defendant wrote the

initials “TDW” beside each informative paragraph on his mandatory Duty to Register form, including alongside the rule requiring offenders to keep the program apprised of name changes:

I understand that it is unlawful for a sex offender registered in North Carolina’s Sex Offender and Public Protection Programs to obtain a change of name under Chapter 101 of the North Carolina General Statutes. I also understand that if I change my name by any other means that I must report in person to the sheriff with whom I am registered within three business days and provide the name change to the sheriff.

The record contains a series of forms recording changed information over the course of nine years, but until late 2022, all clearly show defendant’s former name rather than his current legal name.

Following his release, defendant carried two separate forms of identification. Bodycam videos of the September 2022 traffic stop were admitted into evidence, and they show defendant repeatedly refusing to cooperate by handing over identification, despite claiming that he had a valid driver’s license. Lieutenant Adam Wainwright testified at trial that during the September 2022 traffic stop he did not see either identification until after defendant was taken into custody, and that “[h]e still refused to hand it to me.”

The record’s many registration forms show that defendant was well aware of his duties and regularly went through the motions of compliance, but it was never valid or effective because he never gave his present legal name. The bodycam footage

shows an irate driver escalating a routine traffic stop into a prolonged arrest, requiring a team of back-up officers, over the issue of providing one's name to law enforcement. In this context, defendant's two driver's licenses and the name on his vehicle registration permit the inference that defendant used his former name for his sex offender registry information but otherwise went by his legal name in order to, at best, avoid some of his sex offense's stigma, and at worst, obstruct the sex offender registry's purpose to "assist law enforcement agencies' efforts to protect communities." N.C.G.S. § 14-208.5 (2021).

Accordingly, the above evidence is sufficient to infer defendant's intent. Taken as a whole and in the light most favorable to the State, the evidence was sufficient to convince a reasonable mind that defendant willfully submitted information to the sex offender registry under false pretenses. Therefore, the court did not err in denying defendant's motions to dismiss the case against him.

III. Conclusion

For the reasons addressed above, we find the trial court did not err in denying defendant's motions to dismiss.

NO ERROR.

Judges GORE and FLOOD concur.

Report per Rule 30(e).