IN THE COURT OF APPEALS OF NORTH CAROLINA

No. COA26-141

Filed 18 November 2026

Buncombe County, No. 21CR001600-100

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA

v.

WILLIAM CHRISTOPHER MARTIN

Appeal by Defendant from order entered 19 August 2024 by Judge Alan Z. Thornburg in Buncombe County Superior Court. Heard in the Court of Appeals 28 October 2026.

Attorney General Jeff Jackson, by Assistant Attorney General William L. Flowers III, for the State-Appellee.

Jason Christopher Yoder for Defendant-Appellant.

COLLINS, Judge.

Defendant William Christopher Martin appeals from the trial court's order requiring him to register as a sex offender in North Carolina based upon a juvenile adjudication of delinquency in Florida that required him to register as a sex offender in Florida. Defendant argues that his delinquency adjudication is not a final conviction within the meaning of N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.6(4)(b). For the reasons stated herein, we affirm.

I. Background

On 21 May 2008, Defendant was adjudicated delinquent in Florida for lewd or lascivious molestation of a victim under 12 years of age by an offender under 18 years of age, in violation of Florida Statute § 800.04(5)(c)(1). Defendant was required to register as a sex offender in Florida as a result of the adjudication.

Defendant moved to North Carolina in 2021 and subsequently filed a petition for judicial determination of whether he was required to register as a sex offender in North Carolina. Following a hearing, the trial court entered an order on 19 August 2024 concluding that Defendant's adjudication constituted a reportable conviction under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.6(4)(b) and that he was required to register as a sex offender in North Carolina. Defendant appealed.

II. Discussion

Defendant argues that the trial court erred by concluding that he "had a juvenile adjudication in Florida that constituted a final conviction for purposes of North Carolina's sex offender registry." (capitalization altered).

A. Standard of Review

Issues of statutory interpretation are questions of law, reviewable de novo on appeal. *State v. Williams*, 285 N.C. App. 215, 229 (2022). Under de novo review, this Court considers the matter anew and freely substitutes its own judgment for that of the lower court. *State v. Palacio*, 287 N.C. App. 667, 673 (2023).

"The goal of statutory interpretation is to determine the meaning that the legislature intended upon the statute's enactment." *State v. Rankin*, 371 N.C. 885, 889 (2018) (citation omitted). "The intent of the General Assembly may be found first from the plain language of the statute, then from the legislative history, the spirit of the act and what the act seeks to accomplish." *State v. Dudley*, 270 N.C. App. 771, 773 (2020) (quotation marks and citation omitted).

"If the statutory language is clear and unambiguous, the court eschews statutory construction in favor of giving the words their plain and definite meaning." *State v. Beck*, 359 N.C. 611, 614 (2005) (citation omitted). "When, however, a statute is ambiguous, judicial construction must be used to ascertain the legislative will." *State v. Goble*, 205 N.C. App. 310, 314 (2010) (quotation marks and citation omitted). "When interpreting a statute, a court must give every word of the statute effect, presuming that the legislature carefully chose each word used." *State v. Daw*, 386 N.C. 468, 479 (2024) (quotation marks and citation omitted).

B. Reportable Conviction

A reportable conviction in North Carolina includes a final conviction in another state of an offense "that requires registration under the sex offender registration statutes of that state." N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.6(4)(b) (2025).

Here, Defendant was adjudicated a delinquent juvenile in Florida for lewd or lascivious molestation of a victim under 12 years of age by an offender under 18 years of age, in violation of Florida Statute § 800.04(5)(c)(1). Under Florida law, "convicted"

is defined to include an adjudication of delinquency of a juvenile. Fla. Stat. § 943.0435(1)(b) (2025). Defendant was required to register as a sex offender in Florida as a result of the adjudication, pursuant to Florida Statute § 943.0435(1)(h)(1)(d)(III). Defendant's adjudication of delinquency constitutes a final conviction under Florida law that required him to register as a sex offender in Florida and therefore constitutes a reportable conviction under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.6(4)(b).

Defendant asks us to overrule our decision in *State v. Jackson*, 300 N.C. App. 95 (2025), *review denied*, 926 S.E.2d 412 (2026), which addressed the same issue under Delaware law and reached the same conclusion. We are bound by that decision and may not overrule it. *In re Civil Penalty*, 324 N.C. 373, 384 (1989). Because Defendant's Florida adjudication constitutes a reportable conviction under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.6(4)(b), the trial court did not err by concluding that Defendant is required to register as a sex offender in North Carolina.

III. Conclusion

The trial court did not err by determining that Defendant's adjudication of delinquency in Florida constitutes a reportable conviction under N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-208.6(4)(b). Accordingly, we affirm.

AFFIRMED.

Judge GORE concurs.

Judge GRIFFIN concurs in result only.