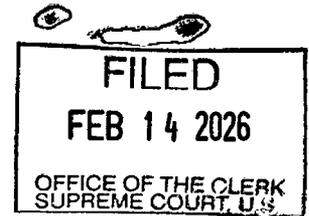


25-7057

No. _____

ORIGINAL

IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES



Dianne Michele Carter - Petitioner,

vs.

April Maryam Kaiser, et al. - Respondents

ON PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI TO
NORTH CAROLINA SUPREME COURT

PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI

Dianne Michele Carter
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QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment permits a state court to dismiss a litigant's case on procedural grounds without affording the litigant any opportunity to respond to the asserted defect.
2. Whether due process is satisfied when a state court enters a procedural dismissal without providing any explanation for its ruling, thereby preventing the litigant and reviewing courts from understanding or evaluating the basis for the judgment.
3. Whether unexplained state-court dismissals that deny both participation and transparency present a federal question reviewable by this Court when no state court has issued a reasoned decision.

LIST OF PARTIES

- ✓ All parties do not appear in the caption of the case on the cover page. A list of all parties to the proceeding in the court whose judgment is the subject of this petition is as follows:

April Maryam Kaiser
Fidelis Uwensuyi-Edosomwan,
AMERICARE HEALTH, PC,
BUDDY CONNECT, INC

RELATED CASES

None.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

OPINIONS BELOW 1

JURISDICTION 2

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED 3

INTRODUCTION 4

STATEMENT OF THE CASE 6

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT 7

CONCLUSION 19

INDEX TO APPENDICES

Appendix A - North Carolina Court of Appeals order
(October 2, 2025) 1a

Appendix B - North Carolina Superior Court order
(March 17, 2025) 1b

Appendix C - Supreme Court of North Carolina order
(December 10, 2025) 1c

TABLE OF AUTHORITIES CITED

CASES	PAGE NUMBER
<i>Armstrong v. Manzo</i> , 380 U.S. 545 (1965)	8
<i>Boddie v. Connecticut</i> , 401 U.S. 371 (1971)	9, 16, 18
<i>Cardinale v. Louisiana</i> , 394 U.S. 437, 439 (1969)	13
<i>Cleveland Bd. of Educ. v. Loudermill</i> , 470 U.S. 532 (1985)	8
<i>Connally v. General Constr. Co.</i> , 269 U.S. 385 (1926)	11
<i>Goldberg v. Kelly</i> , 397 U.S. 254 (1970)	11, 16, 18
<i>Hicks v. Oklahoma</i> , 447 U.S. 343, 346 (1980)	11, 14, 18
<i>Logan v. Zimmerman Brush Co.</i> , 455 U.S. 422 (1982)	8, 9, 10, 15, 17
<i>Michigan v. Long</i> , 463 U.S. 1032, 1040-41 (1983)	13, 16, 18
<i>Minnesota v. National Tea Co.</i> , 309 U.S. 551, 555 (1940)	13
<i>Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.</i> , 339 U.S. 306 (1950)	7, 15
<i>NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson</i> 357 U.S. 449, 455-58 (1958)	14, 16, 18
<i>Ylst v. Nunnemaker</i> , 501 U.S. 797, 803-04 (1991)	13
Constitutional Provisions	
U.S. Const. Amend. XIV, § 1	3, 7
Statutes	
28 U.S.C. § 1257(a)	2

**IN THE
SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
PETITION FOR WRIT OF CERTIORARI**

Petitioner respectfully prays that a writ of certiorari issue to review the judgment below.

OPINIONS BELOW

✓ For cases from state courts:

The opinion of the North Carolina Court of Appeals appears at Appendix A to the petition and is unpublished.

The opinion of the North Carolina Superior Court appears at Appendix B to the petition and is unpublished.

The order of the Supreme Court of North Carolina appears at Appendix C to the petition and is unpublished.

JURISDICTION

The North Carolina Supreme Court denied discretionary review on December 10, 2025, and served on the Petitioner on December 17, 2025. This petition is timely filed within ninety days of that denial, as required by Supreme Court Rule 13.

The jurisdiction of this Court is invoked under 28 U.S.C. § 1257(a).

CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS INVOLVED

U.S. Const. Amend. XIV, § 1

“No State shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws.”

INTRODUCTION

This case presents a fundamental question about the minimum procedures the Constitution requires before a State may terminate a litigant's rights. Petitioner received notice of proceedings in the North Carolina courts, but the promise of due process ended there. Without permitting Petitioner to file any response, and without offering even a sentence of explanation, the trial court dismissed the case on unspecified procedural grounds. The North Carolina Court of Appeals affirmed without addressing the lack of an opportunity to be heard, and the North Carolina Supreme Court declined review. The result is a final judgment entered through a process that afforded Petitioner notice but no voice, and a dismissal but no reason.

The Fourteenth Amendment does not tolerate such a system. This Court has long held that due process requires not only notice, but also a meaningful opportunity to be heard and a reasoned decision capable of review. When a state court dismisses a case without allowing the litigant to respond and without providing any explanation, it deprives the litigant of both. It also insulates the dismissal from meaningful appellate scrutiny, leaving federal rights vulnerable to arbitrary state action.

This petition asks the Court to reaffirm a basic constitutional principle: that a State may not extinguish a litigant's rights through an unexplained procedural

dismissal entered without any opportunity to be heard. The question is cleanly presented, the facts are undisputed, and the constitutional violation is stark.

Review is warranted.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Petitioner initiated this action in the courts of North Carolina, seeking judicial review and relief on two distinct matters properly before the trial court. Following the court's notice of proceedings, the trial court dismissed the entire action without detailed justification. The court cited procedural grounds for the first matter but failed to identify the specific rule or the nature of the Petitioner's alleged non-compliance. The court issued no explanation regarding the second matter, effectively dismissing it by omission. By withholding the reasoning and rules applied, the court deprived the Petitioner of a meaningful opportunity to be heard or to remedy potential defects.

Petitioner timely sought review in the North Carolina Court of Appeals, arguing that the trial court's unexplained dismissal, entered without addressing Petitioner's response, violated fundamental principles of procedural fairness and due process. The Court of Appeals affirmed the dismissal without addressing the lack of opportunity to respond or the absence of any explanation from the trial court.

Petitioner then sought discretionary review in the Supreme Court of North Carolina. The state supreme court denied relief, leaving in place a dismissal that provided no reasoning and afforded Petitioner no opportunity to address the procedural grounds on which the case was terminated.

REASONS FOR GRANTING THE PETITION

- I. The Decision Below Conflicts with Fundamental Principles of Procedural Due Process
- II. The State Court's Unexplained Dismissal Is Arbitrary and Unconstitutional
- III. The Question Presented Is Recurring and of National Importance
- IV. This Case Is an Ideal Vehicle for Resolving the Question Presented

ARGUMENT

I. The Fourteenth Amendment Requires a Meaningful Opportunity To Be Heard Before a State May Dismiss a Case on Procedural Grounds

The Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment provides that no State shall "deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law." U.S. Const. Amend. XIV. This guarantee imposes a constitutional floor beneath which state procedures may not fall. At its core, due process requires two indispensable elements: notice and a meaningful opportunity to be heard before the State may terminate a litigant's rights.

A. Supreme Court precedent establishes that notice without a meaningful opportunity to be heard is constitutionally insufficient

For more than seventy years, this Court has held that due process demands "an opportunity to be heard at a meaningful time and in a meaningful manner." *Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.* The hearing requirement is not a formality; it is the mechanism through which litigants may defend their interests,

correct misunderstandings, and respond to the grounds on which the State proposes to act.

This Court has repeatedly emphasized that notice alone does not satisfy due process. In *Armstrong v. Manzo*, the Court held that due process is violated when the State provides notice but denies a meaningful chance to respond before entering judgment. A later opportunity cannot cure the defect because the deprivation has already occurred. The same principle governs here: a litigant who receives notice but is denied any opportunity to address the basis for dismissal has been deprived of the process the Constitution requires.

The Court reaffirmed this principle in *Cleveland Board of Education v. Loudermill*, explaining that once the State confers a right, “the Constitution defines the minimum procedures” for taking it away. At a minimum, those procedures include notice and a chance to respond. A dismissal entered without permitting any response violates this baseline requirement.

B. The State may not terminate a claim through arbitrary procedures that prevent the litigant from being heard

This Court has also condemned state procedures that extinguish claims without affording a hearing. In *Logan v. Zimmerman Brush Co.*, the Court held that the State violates due process when it terminates a claim through arbitrary procedural mechanisms that prevent the claimant from being heard. A litigant

cannot lose rights because the State's process fails to provide a fair opportunity to present their case.

A dismissal without explanation and without allowing any response is precisely the kind of arbitrary deprivation Logan forbids. It denies the litigant the ability to defend against, explain, or correct the alleged procedural defect. It also deprives reviewing courts of any basis to evaluate the ruling, compounding the constitutional harm.

C. When the State controls the only forum for adjudicating a claim, it must provide meaningful access to that forum

This Court has recognized that when the State monopolizes the only avenue for adjudicating a protected interest, it must provide meaningful access to that forum. *Boddie v. Connecticut*: A silent dismissal that forecloses any opportunity to be heard is functionally indistinguishable from outright denial of access.

D. The procedure used here violated these settled constitutional principles

Petitioner received notice that the case was pending, but the trial court dismissed the action without permitting Petitioner to file any response, without identifying the procedural grounds for dismissal, and without issuing even a sentence of explanation. The North Carolina Court of Appeals affirmed without addressing the lack of an opportunity to be heard, and the North Carolina Supreme Court declined review.

This process provided notice but no voice, and a dismissal but no reason. It deprived Petitioner of the ability to address the asserted procedural defect, deprived the appellate courts of a basis for meaningful review, and deprived Petitioner of the core procedural protection the Constitution requires.

E. The judgment cannot stand

Because the State terminated Petitioner's rights without providing the constitutionally required opportunity to be heard, the judgment below violates the Fourteenth Amendment. The Constitution demands more than a perfunctory notice followed by an unexplained dismissal. It demands a fair process. Petitioner received none.

II. An Unexplained Procedural Dismissal Is Arbitrary and Violates the Fourteenth Amendment Due Process

The Fourteenth Amendment prohibits States from depriving individuals of protected interests through arbitrary or opaque procedures. This Court has long held that due process is violated when the State terminates rights without articulating the rule applied, the reasoning used, or the factual basis for the decision. A judgment entered without explanation is the very definition of arbitrary state action.

This Court's decisions make clear that due process requires procedures that are not only fair, but also transparent and reviewable. In *Logan v. Zimmerman*

Brush Co., the Court held that the State violates due process when it extinguishes a claim through procedures that prevent the litigant from being heard or from understanding the basis of the ruling. A process that terminates a claim without explanation deprives the litigant of any meaningful ability to challenge the decision and deprives reviewing courts of the ability to evaluate its legality.

Similarly, in *Goldberg v. Kelly*, the Court emphasized that due process requires not only notice and a hearing, but also a decision grounded in articulated reasons based on the record. A silent dismissal fails this requirement outright. Without an explanation, there is no assurance that the decision rests on permissible grounds, and no way for the litigant to contest or correct the asserted defect.

This Court has also condemned state action that departs from established procedures or applies them in a standardless manner. In *Hicks v. Oklahoma*, the Court held that the arbitrary denial of a litigant's procedural protections itself constitutes a due-process violation. And in *Connally v. General Construction Co.*, the Court explained that due process forbids decisions made under vague or indeterminate standards that leave individuals unable to discern the governing rule. A dismissal with no explanation is functionally indistinguishable from a standardless rule: it leaves the litigant without notice of the basis for the decision and invites arbitrary enforcement.

The trial court's unexplained dismissal here embodies the constitutional defects these cases forbid. The court provided no indication of the procedural rule applied, no explanation of how Petitioner allegedly failed to comply, and no reasoning that would allow Petitioner—or any reviewing court—to understand or evaluate the ruling. The absence of explanation deprived Petitioner of the ability to challenge the dismissal, deprived the appellate courts of the ability to review it, and deprives this Court of the ability to determine whether the judgment rests on adequate and independent state grounds.

Due process requires more than a silent termination of rights. It requires procedures that are fair, reasoned, and reviewable. The unexplained dismissal below fails each of these requirements and therefore violates the Fourteenth Amendment.

III. The State Courts' Decisions Are Unreviewable and Therefore Raise a Federal Question That Only This Court Can Resolve

The combination of (1) the trial court's refusal to permit any response and (2) the complete absence of explanation for the dismissal renders the state-court decisions effectively unreviewable. The North Carolina Court of Appeals affirmed without addressing the due-process violation, and the North Carolina Supreme Court declined review. No state court provided any reasoning that could be examined for constitutional sufficiency. This opacity prevents meaningful review

and squarely raises a federal question that only this Court can resolve.

This Court has long held that when a state-court judgment is unexplained, ambiguous, or opaque, federal review is appropriate because the Court cannot determine whether the judgment rests on adequate and independent state grounds. In *Michigan v. Long*, the Court explained that when a state court's decision does not clearly indicate the grounds on which it rests, this Court must presume that the judgment relies on federal law and may review it. A silent dismissal, like the one here, cannot satisfy the requirement that a state court "clearly and expressly" state that its judgment rests on independent state grounds.

This principle is deeply rooted. In *Minnesota v. National Tea Co.*, the Court held that when a state-court judgment is "so obscure" that the Court cannot determine whether it rests on federal or state grounds, the federal question remains open for review. Likewise, in *Cardinale v. Louisiana*, the Court emphasized that it must be able to determine whether a federal claim was presented and passed upon; when state courts provide no reasoning, that determination is impossible.

The Court has also recognized that unexplained state-court decisions frustrate federal review in contexts where the Court must "look through" to the last reasoned decision. *Ylst v. Nunnemaker*. When no state court provides a reasoned decision—as here—there is nothing to look through to, and the federal question

remains unresolved. Similarly, in *NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson*, the Court exercised jurisdiction where the state court's unexplained action failed to show that it rested on adequate state grounds, stressing that constitutional claims cannot be insulated from review through silence.

This Court has also condemned arbitrary state procedures that deprive litigants of meaningful review. In *Hicks v. Oklahoma*, the Court held that the arbitrary denial of procedural protections itself violates due process. A dismissal without explanation deprives the litigant of the ability to challenge the ruling and deprives reviewing courts of the ability to evaluate it—precisely the constitutional injury *Hicks* identifies.

The state-court decisions here present exactly the problem these cases address. The trial court dismissed the case without permitting any response and without providing any explanation. The Court of Appeals affirmed without addressing the due-process violation, and the state supreme court declined review. The result is a judgment that is unexplained, unreviewable, and constitutionally suspect. Because the state courts provided no reasoning, this Court cannot determine whether the dismissal rests on adequate state grounds or whether it reflects a violation of federal due-process rights.

Only this Court can clarify that due process forbids dismissals that deny both the opportunity to be heard and any explanation for the ruling. The federal

question is squarely presented, and the absence of any reasoned state-court decision makes this Court's review essential.

IV. This Case Presents an Important and Recurring Question About the Minimum Procedures Required Before a State May Dismiss a Case

Across the country, state courts increasingly rely on summary or unexplained procedural dismissals to manage heavy dockets. When such dismissals occur without allowing the litigant to respond, they create a systemic risk of constitutional violations. Litigants lose their rights without a meaningful process, and appellate courts are left without any reasoning to review. This Court has repeatedly intervened when state procedures threaten to erode the basic guarantees of due process on a broad scale.

This Court's precedents recognize that procedural safeguards serve not only individual fairness but also the structural integrity of judicial systems. In *Mullane v. Central Hanover Bank & Trust Co.*, the Court emphasized that due process protections are designed to ensure the reliability and legitimacy of adjudication, particularly in systems handling large volumes of cases. When courts adopt procedures that deny meaningful participation, the resulting constitutional harm is not isolated—it becomes systemic.

Similarly, in *Logan v. Zimmerman Brush Co.*, the Court explained that arbitrary or defective state procedures pose a recurring threat to constitutional

rights because they allow claims to be extinguished without a fair opportunity to be heard. The Court recognized that such procedural breakdowns are not rare anomalies but structural failures that demand federal correction.

The Court has also intervened when state procedures risk denying access to the only forum capable of adjudicating important rights. In *Boddie v. Connecticut*, the Court held that systemic barriers to participation in state judicial processes raise serious constitutional concerns requiring national clarification. And in *Goldberg v. Kelly*, the Court underscored that inadequate procedures in high-volume adjudicatory systems can produce recurring and widespread due-process violations.

This case presents a clear and recurring question with profound implications for the fairness and integrity of state judicial systems: May a state court dismiss a case on procedural grounds without allowing the litigant to respond and without providing any explanation? The answer determines whether state courts may, through silence and summary action, circumvent the core protections of the Fourteenth Amendment.

Clarification from this Court is urgently needed. As *NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson* and *Michigan v. Long* make clear that unexplained state-court decisions raise federal questions that require this Court's guidance to ensure uniform constitutional standards. Without such clarification, state courts may

continue to rely on opaque procedural dismissals that deny litigants meaningful process and leave reviewing courts unable to assess the legality of those rulings.

This case provides an ideal vehicle for resolving this important and recurring question. The constitutional issue is cleanly presented, the record is straightforward, and the state courts' silence leaves no alternative path for review. Only this Court can ensure that due-process protections are not eroded by unexplained procedural dismissals that deny both participation and transparency.

V. This Case Is an Ideal Vehicle for Resolving the Questions Presented

This case arrives before the Court in a posture that cleanly presents the constitutional question and avoids the complications that often impede review. The facts are undisputed. The trial court dismissed the case without permitting Petitioner to file any response and without providing any explanation for its ruling. The North Carolina Court of Appeals affirmed in a summary disposition that did not address the due-process violation, and the North Carolina Supreme Court declined review. No state court has offered any reasoning that could obscure or complicate the federal issue.

This Court has repeatedly emphasized that it is appropriate to grant review when the record is straightforward and the constitutional question is squarely presented. In *Logan v. Zimmerman Brush Co.*, the Court addressed a due-process challenge in which the State's procedural mechanism terminated a claim without a

meaningful hearing, noting that the clarity of the record made the case suitable for resolving the constitutional issue. Likewise, in *Hicks v. Oklahoma*, the Court reviewed a due-process violation apparent on the face of the record, explaining that arbitrary state procedures that deprive litigants of meaningful review warrant this Court's intervention.

This case also presents the type of unexplained state-court judgment that this Court has held is appropriate for review. In *Michigan v. Long*, the Court explained that when a state-court decision does not clearly indicate the grounds on which it rests, the Court must presume it rests on federal law and may review it. And in *NAACP v. Alabama ex rel. Patterson*, the Court exercised jurisdiction where the state court's unexplained actions prevented meaningful review, emphasizing that silence cannot shield constitutional violations from scrutiny. The same is true here: the absence of any explanation from the state courts leaves the federal question open and ripe for resolution.

Finally, the constitutional issue presented is both important and recurring. As this Court recognized in *Boddie v. Connecticut* and *Goldberg v. Kelly*, systemic procedural deficiencies in state adjudicatory systems demand clear constitutional guidance to ensure that due-process protections are not eroded. The growing reliance on summary or unexplained dismissals in state courts underscores the need for this Court to clarify the minimum procedures required before a State may terminate a litigant's rights.

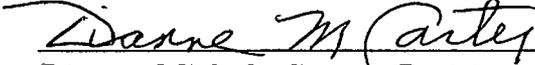
This case provides an ideal vehicle for doing so. The record is clean, the constitutional question is sharply defined, and no alternative grounds complicate review. Only this Court can resolve the question presented and ensure that state courts do not circumvent due-process protections through unexplained procedural dismissals.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, the petition for a writ of certiorari should be granted.

Respectfully submitted,

February 14, 2026


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