

**UNPUBLISHED**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

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**No. 17-6956**

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JOHN LUCIOUS STAFFORD,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

UNKNOWN,

Respondent - Appellee.

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, at Alexandria. Claude M. Hilton, Senior District Judge. (1:17-cv-00154-CMH-TCB)

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Submitted: November 21, 2017

Decided: November 28, 2017

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Before WYNN and THACKER, Circuit Judges, and HAMILTON, Senior Circuit Judge.

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Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

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John Lucious Stafford, Appellant Pro Se.

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Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

John Lucious Stafford seeks to appeals the district court’s order dismissing without prejudice his 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (2012) petition for failure to comply with a court order. The order is not appealable unless a circuit justice or judge issues a certificate of appealability. *See* 28 U.S.C. § 2253(c)(1)(A) (2012). 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) (2012). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists would find that the district court’s assessment of the constitutional claims is debatable or wrong. *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000); *see Miller-El v. Cockrell*, 537 U.S. 322, 336-38 (2003). When the district court denies relief on procedural grounds, the prisoner must demonstrate both that the dispositive procedural ruling is debatable, and that the petition states a debatable claim of the denial of a constitutional right. *Slack*, 529 U.S. at 484-85.

We have independently reviewed the record and conclude that Stafford has not made the requisite showing. Accordingly, we 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*