

**UNPUBLISHED**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

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**No. 17-7554**

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STEPHEN BLANTON,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

HAROLD CLARKE, Director of DOC,

Respondent - Appellee.

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the Western District of Virginia, at  
Roanoke. James P. Jones, District Judge. (7:17-cv-00112-JPJ-RSB)

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Submitted: March 29, 2018

Decided: April 3, 2018

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Before AGEE and DIAZ, Circuit Judges, and HAMILTON, Senior Circuit Judge.

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Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

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Stephen Blanton, Appellant Pro Se. Craig Stallard, Assistant Attorney General, OFFICE  
OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL OF VIRGINIA, Richmond, Virginia, for Appellee.

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Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Stephen Blanton seeks to appeal the district court's final order denying relief on his 28 U.S.C. § 2254 (2012) petition. 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 Blanton 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*