

**UNPUBLISHED**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

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**No. 20-7045**

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RONALD J. MACK,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

HAROLD W. CLARKE,

Respondent - Appellee.

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, at Norfolk. Robert G. Doumar, Senior District Judge. (2:19-cv-00359-RGD-RJK)

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Submitted: March 29, 2021

Decided: April 2, 2021

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Before KING, DIAZ, and THACKER, Circuit Judges.

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Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

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Ronald J. Mack, Appellant Pro Se.

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Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Ronald J. Mack seeks to appeal the district court's order accepting the recommendation of the magistrate judge and denying as untimely Mack's 28 U.S.C. § 2254 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). 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). When the district court denies relief on the merits, a prisoner satisfies this standard by demonstrating that reasonable jurists could find the district court's assessment of the constitutional claims debatable or wrong. *See Buck v. Davis*, 137 S. Ct. 759, 773-74 (2017). 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. *Gonzalez v. Thaler*, 565 U.S. 134, 140-41 (2012) (citing *Slack v. McDaniel*, 529 U.S. 473, 484 (2000)).

Limiting our review of the record to the issues raised in Mack's informal brief, we conclude that Mack has not made the requisite showing.\* *See* 4th Cir. R. 34(b); *see also Jackson v. Lightsey*, 775 F.3d 170, 177 (4th Cir. 2014) ("The informal brief is an important document; under Fourth Circuit rules, our review is limited to issues preserved in that brief."). Accordingly, we deny a certificate of appealability and dismiss the appeal.

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\* Mack does not challenge on appeal the district court's finding that his § 2254 petition was not timely filed.

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*