

**UNPUBLISHED**

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS  
FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

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**No. 20-7325**

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STEPHEN M. COOKE, JR.,

Petitioner - Appellant,

v.

ALLEN GANG, Warden; MARYLAND ATTORNEY GENERAL,

Respondents - Appellees.

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Appeal from the United States District Court for the District of Maryland, at Baltimore.  
Stephanie A. Gallagher, District Judge. (1:19-cv-03256-SAG)

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Submitted: March 15, 2023

Decided: April 7, 2023

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Before DIAZ, Circuit Judge, MOTZ and FLOYD, Senior Circuit Judges.

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Dismissed by unpublished per curiam opinion.

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Michael E. Lawlor, Nicholas George Madiou, BRENNAN MCKENNA & LAWLOR,  
Greenbelt, Maryland, for Appellant. Andrew John DiMiceli, Assistant Attorney General,  
Daniel John Jawor, Assistant Attorney General, OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY  
GENERAL OF MARYLAND, Baltimore, Maryland, for Appellees.

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Unpublished opinions are not binding precedent in this circuit.

PER CURIAM:

Stephen M. Cooke, Jr., seeks to appeal the district court's order denying relief on his 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*, 580 U.S. 100, 115-17 (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)).

We have independently reviewed the record and the parties' informal briefs, and we conclude that Cooke 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*