

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA  
COUNTY OF GREENVILLE

Adam Matthew Steinberger,

Defendant,

v.

Linhart Realty Group, LLC d/b/a RE/MAX  
Results,

Plaintiff.

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS

Case No: 2025-CP-23-05006

DEFENDANT'S PRO SE MOTION TO  
DISMISS FOR ABUSE OF PROCESS AND  
UNLAWFUL USE OF LITIGATION AS  
LAWFARE

FILED: 26MAR5PM3:23  
COC JAY GRESHAM GUL SC

### **I. INTRODUCTION AND PRELIMINARY STATEMENT**

Defendant respectfully moves this Court to dismiss Civil Action No. 2025-CP-23-05006 in its entirety. This case is not a legitimate civil action. It is lawfare, the deliberate weaponization of litigation as an instrument of coercion and regulatory manipulation, filed by a licensed South Carolina real estate agent who, having been caught engaging in conduct constituting fraud, panic-selling, and multiple violations of the NAR Code of Ethics, now seeks to use this Court as a shield against the loss of his real estate license before the South Carolina Labor, Licensing and Regulation Division ("SC LLR").

Defendant further notes that Plaintiff has filed this action under the name of his corporate entity, Linhart Realty Group, LLC d/b/a RE/MAX Results, rather than in his own name, despite the fact that the conduct at issue was performed personally by Robert Jackson Batson, a licensed South Carolina real estate agent acting in his individual capacity as the listing agent for this transaction. The use of a corporate identity in this litigation appears calculated not only to limit personal liability, but to obscure Batson's individual role in the underlying misconduct from public view, thereby protecting his personal professional reputation and his standing before the SC LLR at the very moment that standing is under review. This Court should not permit the shield of an LLC to obscure the identity of the individual whose licensed conduct is the sole subject of both this civil action and the parallel disciplinary proceeding. Accordingly, throughout this motion, "Plaintiff," "Robert Jackson Batson," and "Linhart Realty Group, LLC d/b/a RE/MAX Results" are used interchangeably to refer to the same individual and his corporate vehicle, as the conduct described herein was **performed by Batson personally in his capacity as a licensed real estate agent**.

The word lawfare is chosen deliberately and precisely. Plaintiff Robert Jackson Batson filed this civil suit on August 12, 2025, four months after Defendant's LLR complaint (No. 2025-167) had already been on record. The LLR complaint was filed April 10, 2025. The civil suit was filed August 12, 2025. The sequence is not coincidental. It is causal. Plaintiff filed this action knowing full well that a pending regulatory matter threatened his licensure, and that a favorable court judgment, or the threat of one, could be leveraged to suppress Defendant's whistleblower testimony, coerce a public retraction, and present the Office of Disciplinary Counsel with an apparent civil victory that might influence its proceedings.

This is confirmed by the extraordinary timing of recent events: on February 26, 2026, the SC LLR notified Defendant that his complaint had been reviewed by the commission and formally forwarded to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel for further action. Then on March 2, 2026, Plaintiff submitted a motion to dismiss Defendant's most recent amendment to this Court, the amendment containing the complete, detailed factual testimony of what actually occurred. The simultaneity of these two filings is not coincidence. It is coordination. Plaintiff is attempting to prevent this Court from reviewing the very facts that led the LLR to escalate his case to disciplinary proceedings.

This Court should not permit itself to be used as an instrument of lawfare. The motion to dismiss Defendant's amendment must be denied. The underlying civil action must be dismissed. Justice requires it.

## **II. STATEMENT OF FACTS AND CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE**

### **A. The Original Transaction and Agent's Misconduct (February-March 2025)**

In February 2025, Defendant, a disabled individual later formally diagnosed with AuDHD (combined Autism and ADHD) on October 21, 2025, approached Plaintiff Robert Jackson Batson, a licensed South Carolina real estate agent, for assistance in selling his residence in Travelers Rest, South Carolina. Defendant was in a state of acute personal and financial distress, which he disclosed to Plaintiff at the outset of their relationship.

Rather than provide Defendant with the full range of options a licensed fiduciary agent is obligated to present, Plaintiff engaged in a pattern of manipulation, pressure tactics, and material misrepresentation consistent with engineering a panic sale. These tactics included: exploiting Defendant's disclosed religious convictions; misrepresenting the identities and interests of the prospective buyer (who was Plaintiff's personal contact); failing to disclose the nature of dual agency; and structuring a transaction that would have required Defendant to surrender his personal vehicle as part of the sale, despite Defendant's repeated protests that doing so would render him unable to travel to work or school.

Plaintiff provided Defendant no valuation justification for either property discussed. Plaintiff used religious language to manufacture trust. Plaintiff misrepresented that a cash-to-close alternative had been approved, then repudiated that representation after Defendant relied upon it in good faith by selling his vehicle.

### **B. Plaintiff's Demand: \$17,000 Plus Forced Public Retraction (March 2025 onward)**

On March 11, 2025, rather than offer mediation or arbitration as required under NAR Code of Ethics Articles 17 and Standards of Practice 17-1 and 17-2, Plaintiff directed Defendant to "contact an attorney", with full knowledge that Defendant was in financial hardship and could not afford legal representation.

Plaintiff's subsequent demands made the true nature of this dispute clear. Plaintiff demanded: (1) payment of \$17,318.14, a figure identical to the cash-to-close shortfall from a transaction that never legally closed; and (2) a public retraction of all of Defendant's whistleblowing communications to government and non-government agencies regarding Plaintiff's misconduct. This second demand is illegal. Federal and state whistleblower protections

exist precisely to prohibit the silencing of individuals who report misconduct to regulatory bodies. The demand for a public retraction is not a legitimate legal remedy. It is extortion.

### **C. The LLR Complaint (Filed April 10, 2025 - Before Litigation)**

Having exhausted all good-faith efforts to resolve this matter, including attempts at mediation that Plaintiff never offered and was legally required to initiate, Defendant filed LLR Complaint No. 2025-167 on April 10, 2025 with the South Carolina Labor, Licensing and Regulation Division. This complaint preceded the filing of this civil action by four months.

The LLR initially assigned the complaint to Jennifer Farmer. Good cause was denied the same day without explanation. Following Defendant's re-engagement of the complaint on December 14, 2025, and the subsequent submission of complete testimony, the LLR commission reviewed the matter and, as of February 26, 2026, forwarded the complaint to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel for further action. Contact in that office: Alice Douglas, (803) 896-4479.

### **D. Civil Suit Filed August 12, 2025 - Four Months After LLR Complaint**

Plaintiff filed Civil Action No. 2025-CP-23-05006 in Greenville County on August 12, 2025. At the time of filing, Plaintiff was aware that LLR Complaint No. 2025-167 was on record. Plaintiff filed this suit not to vindicate a legitimate legal claim, but to: (1) manufacture a civil judgment that could be cited to influence LLR proceedings; (2) financially exhaust and intimidate Defendant into withdrawing his whistleblower testimony; and (3) coerce Defendant into publishing a false public retraction as a condition of settlement.

### **E. The Coordinated Late-February/Early-March 2026 Events Confirm Lawfare**

By March 4, 2026, two events had occurred immediately following one another: (1) J. Watson Wharton, III of the SC LLR notified Defendant that the complaint had been reviewed and forwarded to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel on February 26, 2026; and (2) Plaintiff's counsel filed a motion to dismiss Defendant's most recent amendment to this Court on March 2, 2026, the amendment containing the complete eyewitness testimony of the underlying events.

The amendment Plaintiff seeks to suppress contains materially significant information directly relevant to both this civil proceeding and the LLR disciplinary matter. Plaintiff's attempt to prevent this Court from reviewing that testimony while simultaneously facing escalated disciplinary proceedings is not a coincidence. It is lawfare in its most transparent form. Plaintiff is using this Court to prevent the truth from being on the record in either forum.

## **III. LEGAL ARGUMENT**

### **A. This Action Constitutes Abuse of Process**

South Carolina recognizes the tort of abuse of process, which occurs when legal process is used for a purpose other than that for which it was designed. To establish abuse of process, a party must show: (1) an ulterior purpose; and (2) a willful act in the use of process not proper in the regular conduct of the proceeding. As the Court noted in *Hainer*, 'the improper purpose usually takes the form of coercion to obtain a collateral advantage not properly involved in the proceeding itself', precisely what Plaintiff is doing here. *Hainer v. American Medical International, Inc.*, 328 S.C. 128 (1997).

Both elements are present here. Plaintiff's ulterior purpose is to suppress Defendant's regulatory complaint and avoid the loss of his real estate license. The willful improper act is the demand, embedded in settlement negotiations, for a public retraction of federally and state-protected whistleblower communications as a condition of dismissal. No legitimate civil plaintiff demands that a defendant lie to the public as a term of settlement. That demand alone reveals that this case has nothing to do with \$17,000 and everything to do with controlling the narrative before the Office of Disciplinary Counsel.

### **B. Anticipatory Grounds for Malicious Prosecution Counterclaim**

Defendant places on record that upon termination of this action in Defendant's favor, the facts of this case will support a claim for malicious prosecution under South Carolina law. Such a claim requires: (1) institution of judicial proceedings; (2) by or at the instance of the defendant; (3) termination of such proceedings in plaintiff's favor; (4) malice in instituting such proceedings; (5) want of probable cause; and (6) resulting injury or damage. *Gibson v. Brown*, 245 S.C. 547, 141 S.E.2d 653 (1965). Elements (1), (2), (4), (5), and (6) are already established. Plaintiff initiated these proceedings with malice, the malice of a licensed professional who, having been caught violating the NAR Code of Ethics and the fiduciary duties owed to a disabled client, sought to weaponize the courts against the very person who reported him. Probable cause is absent: the \$17,318.14 figure represents a commission and closing shortfall from a transaction that (a) never lawfully closed, (b) was engineered through manipulation of a disabled individual, and (c) depended on a dual agency arrangement Defendant never signed. Defendant reserves all rights to assert this claim upon favorable termination of the present action.

### **C. This Action Is Lawfare and Must Be Dismissed as an Abuse of Judicial Process**

This Court is being asked to serve as an instrument of lawfare. The term lawfare refers to the use of legal mechanisms (courts, litigation, discovery, judgment) not to resolve a genuine dispute, but to achieve a strategic objective outside the courtroom. Here, that objective is plain: obtain a civil judgment, or the threat thereof, sufficient to: (a) cause the LLR to view the underlying dispute through the lens of a court finding favorable to Plaintiff; (b) coerce Defendant into retracting testimony that is currently before the Office of Disciplinary Counsel; and (c) exhaust Defendant financially so that the truth of what happened is never fully heard in any forum.

Courts have inherent authority to dismiss proceedings that constitute an abuse of process or that are brought in bad faith for improper purposes. See *Chambers v. NASCO, Inc.*, 501 U.S. 32 (1991) (courts have inherent power to sanction bad-faith conduct and dismiss abusive litigation); South Carolina has also codified this principle: S.C. Code Ann. § 15-36-10 expressly authorizes courts to sanction parties and attorneys for filing pleadings for an improper purpose, including 'to harass or to cause unnecessary delay or needless increase in the cost of litigation,' and empowers courts to issue directives 'designed to deter a future frivolous action or an action in bad faith'.

**Dismissal is the appropriate remedy. Not a continuance. Not a reduced judgment. Dismissal. Because the purpose of this litigation was never to recover \$17,000. The \$17,000 is the cover. The real objective is to silence a disabled whistleblower and preserve a real estate license that the SC LLR's Office of Disciplinary Counsel is now reviewing. This Court should decline to be used for that purpose.**

#### **D. Plaintiff Violated Mandatory Mediation and Arbitration Requirements**

NAR Code of Ethics Article 17 and Standards of Practice 17-1 and 17-2 impose mandatory obligations on licensed Realtors to pursue mediation and arbitration before resorting to litigation. Plaintiff, as a licensed South Carolina real estate agent bound by the NAR Code of Ethics as a condition of licensure, was legally required to initiate mediation before filing suit. He did not. Instead, on March 11, 2025, he directed Defendant, a financially distressed disabled individual, to "contact an attorney," knowing full well the cost of litigation would be prohibitive.

Plaintiff's failure to initiate mandatory mediation or arbitration is itself a violation of the professional obligations governing his license. It is also evidence of bad faith and improper purpose: Plaintiff chose litigation precisely because he knew it would be financially devastating to Defendant and because a civil suit, unlike mediation, produces a public record and a potential judgment that could be leveraged against the LLR.

#### **E. Defendant's Whistleblower Activity Is Protected and Cannot Be Retracted by Court Order or Settlement Demand**

Plaintiff has consistently demanded, as a condition of any resolution, that Defendant publish a public retraction of all communications made to government agencies, regulatory bodies, non-profit organizations, and the public regarding Plaintiff's misconduct. This demand is unlawful. Federal whistleblower protections, including those arising under 18 U.S.C. § 1513 (retaliation against witnesses, victims, and informants) and applicable South Carolina public policy protections, prohibit using legal process to compel the retraction of truthful reports made to government authorities.

**The demand for a retraction is not incidental to this lawsuit. It is the lawsuit. Plaintiff does not need \$17,000. Plaintiff needs the LLR complaint to go away. The money demand is the mechanism. The retraction is the goal. This Court should not enforce, implicitly or explicitly, a demand that a disabled whistleblower recant truthful testimony submitted to a state licensing authority.**

#### **IV. THE COURT'S AMENDMENT MUST NOT BE DISMISSED**

Plaintiff has moved to dismiss Defendant's most recent amendment to this Court. That amendment contains the complete eyewitness testimony describing in full detail the events underlying both this civil action and LLR Complaint No. 2025-167. The motion to dismiss that amendment was filed immediately following February 26, 2026, the date that the LLR forwarded the complaint to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel.

**If this Court dismisses Defendant's amendment, it will do so nearly on the very day that the LLR escalated its proceedings, and the record in this Court will be stripped of the materially significant facts that caused the LLR to escalate. That outcome would benefit only one party: the Plaintiff. It would represent this Court being used as a tool of lawfare to shape the evidentiary landscape in a parallel regulatory proceeding.**

Defendant respectfully urges this Court to deny Plaintiff's motion to dismiss the amendment and to permit the full factual record to be before this Court. A court genuinely interested in justice does not adjudicate a dispute with one hand tied behind its back at the request of the party with more social connections and financial resources. **The amendment must stand.**

## **V. PLEA FOR EQUAL JUSTICE**

Defendant acknowledges that Plaintiff, **Robert Jackson Batson of Linhart Realty Group, LLC d/b/a RE/MAX Results**, is an active member of the Travelers Rest Greater Chamber of Commerce and an individual with established professional and social connections in Greenville County. Defendant is an autistic, previously unemployed software engineer and ex-seminary student who was forced into poverty as a direct result of the events that have ensued over the last year from this litigation. Defendant has no comparable connections or resources.

The justice system exists precisely to counterbalance these imbalances. Defendant does not ask this Court for special treatment. Defendant asks only that this Court apply the law **equally**, without deference to the social capital or professional standing of the party who has more of it. **Neurotypical privilege, professional status, and community connections are not legal arguments.** They should not function as a thumb on the scale of justice.

Defendant further notes that the AuDHD diagnosis confirmed in October 2025 retroactively establishes what should have been apparent from the outset: this was a vulnerable, disabled individual who was exploited by a licensed professional who owed him a fiduciary duty. The law was designed for exactly this situation. It should be applied.

## **VI. RELIEF REQUESTED**

Defendant respectfully requests that this Court:

1. DISMISS Civil Action No. 2025-CP-23-05006 in its entirety, with prejudice, as an abuse of process and an unlawful use of civil litigation as lawfare to suppress protected whistleblower activity and manipulate parallel regulatory proceedings before the SC LLR;
2. DENY Plaintiff's motion to dismiss Defendant's most recent amendment, and permit the complete factual testimony to remain in the record of this Court;
3. FIND that this litigation constitutes lawfare: the strategic misuse of civil process to avoid disciplinary accountability before the SC LLR and to coerce the retraction of federally protected whistleblower communications;
4. COMMUNICATE to the SC LLR Office of Disciplinary Counsel, to the extent permitted by law, that this Court's review of the record in this matter does not reflect a civil finding favorable to Plaintiff on the merits of the underlying transaction or the conduct of Defendant's whistleblower activities;
5. CONSIDER whether sanctions, costs, or other remedies are appropriate given Plaintiff's bad-faith use of this Court as an instrument of regulatory manipulation; and
6. GRANT such other and further relief as this Court deems just and proper in the interests of justice.

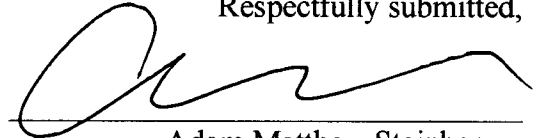
## **VII. CONCLUSION**

**This case should have never been filed. It is not about \$17,000. It is about a licensed real estate agent who exploited a disabled client, was reported to the regulatory authority empowered to revoke his license, and responded by filing a civil suit designed to exhaust, silence, and discredit the person who reported him. That is lawfare. This Court has the authority and the obligation to say so, and to dismiss this action accordingly.**

The SC LLR has now confirmed what Defendant has maintained throughout: **there is sufficient cause to refer this matter to the Office of Disciplinary Counsel. Robert Jackson Batson should answer to that body for his conduct. He should not be permitted to use this Court to escape that accounting.**

Defendant respectfully requests dismissal.

Respectfully submitted,



Adam Matthew Steinberger  
Defendant, Pro Se  
236 Tippin Trl  
Travelers Rest, SC 29690  
adam@matthewsteinberger.com  
(864) 517-4117

Date: 3/5/26

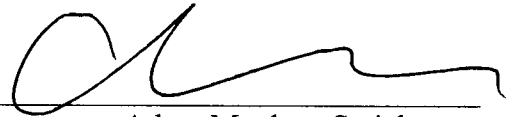
**CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I hereby certify that on this 5<sup>th</sup> day of March, 2026, a true and correct copy of the foregoing Motion to Dismiss was served upon Plaintiff's counsel of record by depositing a copy thereof in the United States Mail, first-class postage prepaid, or by such other means as permitted by the South Carolina Rules of Civil Procedure, as addressed as follows:

W. Christopher Schwartz

P.O. Box 1804

Greenville, SC 29602



Adam Matthew Steinberger

Defendant, Pro Se

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA )

IN THE COURT OF COMMON PLEAS )

THIRTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT )

COUNTY OF GREENVILLE )

CASE NO.: 2025-CP-23-05006

Linhart Realty Group LLC )

dba Remax Results Plaintiff, )

Adam Matthew Steinberger )  
Defendant. )

**MOTION AND ORDER INFORMATION  
FORM AND COVERSHEET**

FILED: 26MAR5PM3:23  
COC JAY GREENHAM GVL SC

Plaintiff's Attorney:

\_\_\_\_\_, Bar No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Defendant's Attorney:

\_\_\_\_\_, Bar No. \_\_\_\_\_

Address: 236 \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

☒ **MOTION HEARING REQUESTED** (attach written motion and complete SECTIONS I and III)

☐ **FORM MOTION, NO HEARING REQUESTED** (complete SECTIONS II and III)

☐ **PROPOSED ORDER/CONSENT ORDER** (complete SECTIONS II and III)

**SECTION I: Hearing Information**

Nature of Motion: Lawfare

Estimated Time Needed: \_\_\_\_\_

Court Reporter Needed: ☐ YES / ☐ NO

**SECTION II: Motion/Order Type**

☐ Written motion attached

☐ Form Motion/Order

I hereby move for relief or action by the court as set forth in the attached proposed order.

Signature of Attorney for ☐ Plaintiff / ☐ Defendant

Date submitted \_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III: Motion Fee**

☒ **PAID - AMOUNT:** \$ 25.00

☐ **EXEMPT:**

(check reason)

☐ Rule to Show Cause in Child or Spousal Support

☐ Domestic Abuse or Abuse and Neglect

☐ Indigent Status ☐ State Agency v. Indigent Party

☐ Sexually Violent Predator Act ☐ Post-Conviction Relief

☐ Motion for Stay in Bankruptcy

☐ Motion for Publication ☐ Motion for Execution (Rule 69, SCRCP)

☐ Proposed order submitted at request of the court; or,

reduced to writing from motion made in open court per judge's instructions

Name of Court Reporter: \_\_\_\_\_

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

**JUDGE'S SECTION**

☐ Motion Fee to be paid upon filing of the attached order.

☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

JUDGE CODE \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**CLERK'S VERIFICATION**

Collected by: KM Date Filed: March 5, 2026

☒ **MOTION FEE COLLECTED:** \$ 25.00

☐ **CONTESTED - AMOUNT DUE:** \$ \_\_\_\_\_