

TEXAS COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FIRST DISTRICT

Valerie Lauren Mata v. the State of Texas

No. 01-25-01002-CR (Tex. App.—Houston [1st Dist.] Jan. 29, 2026) · No. 01-25-01002-CR · Decided January 29, 2026

SUMMARY

The Texas Court of Appeals for the First District dismissed Valerie Lauren Mata’s appeal from a conviction for improper relationship with a student. The court held that Mata validly waived her right to appeal as part of her guilty plea in exchange for the State waiving its right to a jury trial, leaving the court without jurisdiction.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	Texas Court of Appeals for the First District
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Justice Guerra; Justice Caughey; Justice Dokupil
JURISDICTION	Court of Appeals for the First District of Texas
DECIDED	January 29, 2026
DOCKET	01-25-01002-CR
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Appellant attempted to appeal from a judgment of conviction after pleading guilty and waiving her right to appeal as part of a plea agreement.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court reviewed the record to determine whether appellant validly waived her right of appeal and whether it possessed appellate jurisdiction.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished and not designated for publication under Texas Rule of Appellate Procedure 47.2(b).
PARTIES	Valerie Lauren Mata v. The State of Texas

TOPICS

- appellate jurisdiction
- plea bargaining
- appellate procedure
- criminal procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

- Criminal appellate procedure
- Plea agreements
- Appellate jurisdiction

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Mata validly waived her right to appeal as part of her guilty plea.
2. Whether the court of appeals had jurisdiction to consider an appeal that the defendant had validly waived.

HOLDINGS

1. A defendant may validly waive the right to appeal as part of a plea agreement, even when sentencing is not agreed upon, if consideration is given for the waiver; the record here showed that the State gave up its right to a jury trial in exchange for Mata's waiver.
2. A valid waiver of the right to appeal deprived the court of jurisdiction, requiring dismissal of the appeal.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Because appellant has no right of appeal, we must dismiss the appeal for lack of jurisdiction.” (at 2)

“The appellate record indicates that appellant agreed to waive her right of appeal in exchange for the State giving up its right to a jury trial.” (at 2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Mata pleaded guilty to improper relationship with a student under Texas Penal Code section 21.12(a). She received a five-year sentence in the Correctional Institutions Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice. As part of her plea, she agreed to waive her right to appeal in exchange for the State giving up its right to a jury trial.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The 228th District Court of Harris County convicted Mata of improper relationship with a student and sentenced her to five years' incarceration. The trial court certified that she had no right of appeal because the case was a plea-bargain case. On appeal, appointed counsel advised that Mata had waived her right to appeal, and the court dismissed the appeal for lack of jurisdiction.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Ex parte Broadway, 301 S.W.3d 694, 699 (Tex. Crim. App. 2009)
- Carson v. State, 559 S.W.3d 489, 494 (Tex. Crim. App. 2018)
- Chavez v. State, 183 S.W.3d 675, 680 (Tex. Crim. App. 2006)

OPINION

PER CURIAM.

Opinion issued January 29, 2026 In The Court of Appeals For The First District of Texas NO. 01-25-01002-CR VALERIE LAUREN MATA, Appellant V. THE STATE OF TEXAS, Appellee On Appeal from the 228th District Court Harris County, Texas Trial Court Case No. 1866374 MEMORANDUM OPINION Appellant Valerie Lauren Mata attempted to appeal from a judgment of conviction for the offense of improper relationship with a student for which appellant was sentenced to five years' incarceration in the Correctional Institutions Division of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice.

See TEX. PENAL CODE § 21.12(a). Appellant's appointed counsel has advised the Court that appellant waived the right of appeal. The clerk's record indicates that appellant pleaded guilty and as part of her plea, she agreed to waive her right to appeal.

The trial court's certification of defendant's right of appeal certified that appellant had no right of appeal because this was a plea-bargain case. A defendant may waive her appeal as part of a plea even if sentencing is not agreed upon, if consideration is given for that waiver. See *Ex parte Broadway*, 301 S.W.3d 694, 699 (Tex. Crim. App. 2009).

For a waiver to be valid, the record must show that the State gave up its right to a jury trial in exchange for the defendant's waiver of her right to appeal. See *Carson v. State*, 559 S.W.3d 489, 494 (Tex. Crim. App. 2018).

The appellate record indicates that appellant agreed to waive her right of appeal in exchange for the State giving up its right to a jury trial. Because appellant has no right of appeal, we must dismiss the appeal for lack of jurisdiction. See *Chavez v. State*, 183 S.W.3d 675, 680 (Tex. Crim. App. 2006).

Accordingly, we dismiss this appeal. Any pending motions are dismissed as moot. PER CURIAM Panel consists of Justices Guerra, Caughey, and Dokupil. Do not publish. TEX. R. APP. P. 47.2(b).