

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
NORTH CAROLINA, CHARLOTTE DIVISION

Jason R. Pajtas v. Jonathan Bryant, Lincoln Charter School, and
Trisha Amos

Pajtas v. Bryant · No. 3:25-CV-00930-KDB-DCK · Decided March 10, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina granted defendants’ motion to dismiss a pro se parent’s action arising from his minor son’s school suspension. The court held that the non-attorney parent could not litigate his son’s claims and lacked standing to assert individual claims because he alleged no legally cognizable injury of his own. The dismissal was without prejudice, and the Clerk was directed to close the matter.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Charlotte Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Kenneth D. Bell
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of North Carolina, Charlotte Division
DECIDED	March 10, 2026
DOCKET	3:25-CV-00930-KDB-DCK
DISPOSITION	dismissed
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Defendants moved to dismiss a pro se plaintiff's action arising from his minor son's school suspension. The court granted the motion without prejudice and directed the Clerk to close the matter.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The opinion does not expressly identify a separate standard of review for the motion to dismiss.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Unpublished district court memorandum and order; precedential status not stated.

TOPICS

- standing
- subject matter jurisdiction
- civil procedure
- due process
- section 1983

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

constitutional law

civil rights

education law

remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether a pro se, non-attorney parent may litigate claims belonging to a minor child in federal court.
2. Whether Plaintiff had Article III standing to assert individual claims when the alleged injuries belonged solely to his minor child.

HOLDINGS

1. A pro se, non-attorney parent may not generally litigate the claims of a minor child in federal court, and Plaintiff could not prosecute his son's claims without securing counsel.
2. Plaintiff lacked Article III standing to assert individual claims because he alleged no cognizable injury to himself; the alleged harms belonged solely to his minor child.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“Federal law generally permits individuals to represent only their own interests in federal court.”

“Although a non-attorney parent may assert a claim on behalf of their child, “non-attorney parents generally may not litigate the claims of their minor children in federal court.””

“The “irreducible constitutional minimum of standing consists of three elements. The plaintiff must have (1) suffered an injury in fact, (2) that is fairly traceable to the challenged conduct of the defendant, and (3) that is likely to be redressed by a favorable judicial decision.””

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff's minor son received a five-day suspension following a disciplinary incident at school. Plaintiff sought reinstatement, expungement of the suspension from his son's academic record, and an injunction requiring a hearing before future suspensions. Plaintiff alleged violations of his son's due process rights under 42 U.S.C. § 1983, North Carolina General Statutes § 115C-390.6, and the North Carolina Constitution, but did not allege a cognizable injury to himself.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

After Plaintiff's son received a five-day school suspension, Plaintiff filed this action individually and as parent and next friend of his minor child on November 21, 2025. Defendants moved to dismiss. The court issued a Roseboro Order because Plaintiff was proceeding pro se, but Plaintiff did not respond within the time allowed. The court granted dismissal without prejudice based on Plaintiff's inability to litigate his son's claims without counsel and his lack of standing to assert individual claims.

DISPOSITION

dismissed

CASES CITED

- Wojcicki v. SCANA/SCE&G, 947 F.3d 240, 243 (4th Cir. 2020)
- Pridgen v. Andresen, 113 F.3d 391, 393 (2d Cir. 1997)
- Myers v. Loudoun County Public Schools, 418 F.3d 395, 400-01 (4th Cir. 2005)
- L.C. by & through Dunbar v. Charter School USA at Cary, LLC, No. 5:24-CV-66-FL, 2025 WL 819116, at *2 (E.D.N.C. Mar. 13, 2025)
- Spokeo, Inc. v. Robins, 578 U.S. 330, 338, 341 (2016)
- TransUnion LLC v. Ramirez, 141 S. Ct. 2190, 2204 (2021)
- Garey v. James S. Farrin, P.C., 35 F.4th 917 (4th Cir. 2022)

OPINION

JASON R. PAJTAS v. JONATHAN BRYANT, LINCOLN CHARTER SCHOOL, AND TRISHA AMOS

PER CURIAM.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

CHARLOTTE DIVISION

CIVIL ACTION NO. 3:25-CV-00930-KDB-DCK

JASON R. PAJTAS,

Plaintiff,

v. MEMORANDUM AND

ORDER

JONATHAN BRYANT, LINCOLN

CHARTER SCHOOL, AND

TRISHA AMOS,

Defendants. After Plaintiff Jason Pajtas' son received a five-day suspension following a disciplinary incident at school, Pajtas filed this action on November 21, 2025, both individually and as parent and next friend of his minor child. In the Complaint, Pajtas seeks his son's reinstatement at school, the expungement of the suspension from the child's academic record, and an injunction prohibiting Defendants from imposing future suspensions without first providing a hearing. See Doc. No. 1. Now before the Court is Defendants' Motion to Dismiss (Doc. No. 11), which argues, among other grounds, that Pajtas, as a pro se litigant, may not prosecute claims on behalf of his minor son and that he lacks standing to bring his "individual" claims.¹ The Court agrees. Federal law generally permits individuals to represent only their own interests in federal court. Under 28 U.S.C. § 1654, "the parties may plead and conduct their own cases personally or by counsel," a provision that secures the right of self-representation but does not authorize a litigant to represent others. Because Pajtas is proceeding pro se, the Court issued a Roseboro Order on February 10, 2026 (Doc. No. 14). However, Pajtas has not responded to Defendants' Motion, and the time to do

so has expired. to appear on behalf of another. *Wojcicki v. SCANA/SCE&G*, 947 F.3d 240, 243 (4th Cir. 2020) (citing *Pridgen v. Andresen*, 113 F.3d 391, 393 (2d Cir. 1997) (explaining that pro se status “denotes ... appearance for one’s self,” not for “another person or entity”)). The Fourth Circuit has accordingly held that “the right to litigate for oneself...does not create a coordinate right to litigate for others.” *Myers v. Loudoun Cty. Pub. Sch.*, 418 F.3d 395, 400 (4th Cir. 2005). Although a non-attorney parent may assert a claim on behalf of their child, “non-attorney parents generally may not litigate the claims of their minor children in federal court.” *Id.* at 400– 01 (emphasis added); see also *Wojcicki*, 947 F.3d at 243; *L.C. by & through Dunbar v. Charter Sch. USA at Cary, LLC*, No. 5:24-CV-66-FL, 2025 WL 819116, at *2 (E.D.N.C. Mar. 13, 2025). This rule reflects the overwhelming consensus among the circuits, which prohibit non-attorney parents from prosecuting their children’s claims. *Id.* (collecting cases). In sum, regardless of the fact that Pajtas has failed to respond to Defendants’ Motion, he has not secured counsel in this matter, and the Fourth Circuit precludes him from litigating claims on behalf of his son. Further, Defendants contend that Pajtas lacks standing to bring his individual claims. If a plaintiff lacks standing, then there is no case or controversy, and the court lacks subject-matter jurisdiction over his claims. *Spokeo, Inc. v. Robins*, 578 U.S. 330, 338 (2016) (“Standing to sue is a doctrine rooted in the traditional understanding of a case or controversy.”). The “irreducible constitutional minimum of standing consists of three elements. The plaintiff must have (1) suffered an injury in fact, (2) that is fairly traceable to the challenged conduct of the defendant, and (3) that is likely to be redressed by a favorable judicial decision.” *Spokeo*, 578 U.S. 330 at 338 (internal quotations omitted). Indeed, “Article III standing requires a concrete injury even in the context of a statutory violation.” *Id.* at 341; *TransUnion LLC v. Ramirez*, 141 S. Ct. 2190, 2204 (2021) (to establish injury in fact plaintiff’s allegations must be sufficient to show he suffered concrete harm). Here, Pajtas seeks to litigate claims involving alleged harms belonging solely to his minor child, including that his son’s due process rights under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 were violated, that Defendants violated N.C. Gen. Stat. § 115C-390.6 and the North Carolina Constitution as to his son, and he seeks declaratory judgment on his son’s behalf. See Doc. No. 14 39-63. Although Pajtas purports to assert individual claims, he alleges no cognizable injury of his own. See *Garey v. James S. Farrin, P.C.*, 35 F.4th 917 (4th Cir. 2022) (“Plaintiffs who do not have a legally cognizable injury lack standing to bring suit in federal court.”). Accordingly, Pajtas lacks standing and the Court will GRANT Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss without prejudice.” NOW THEREFORE IT IS ORDERED THAT:

1. Defendants’ Motion to Dismiss (Doc. No. 11) is GRANTED; and
2. The Clerk is directed to close this matter in accordance with this Order.

SO ORDERED ADJUDGED AND DECREED. Signed: March 9, 2026 Kenneth D. Bell United States District Judge
iy of ? Although Defendants raise several additional grounds for dismissal, the Court need not address them.

