

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE WESTERN DISTRICT OF
MICHIGAN, SOUTHERN DIVISION

Michella Smith, et al. v. Brian S. Berger, et al.

Berger · No. 1:25-cv-1133 · Decided January 7, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan magistrate judge recommends denying Plaintiffs’ motion for an emergency temporary restraining order. The recommendation concludes that Plaintiffs failed to satisfy the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65 and further recommends striking the motion because it contains insufficiently redacted photographs of a child.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Phillip J. Green, United States Magistrate Judge
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Western District of Michigan, Southern Division
DECIDED	January 7, 2026
DOCKET	1:25-cv-1133
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiffs moved for an emergency temporary restraining order. The magistrate judge issued a report and recommendation under 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B), recommending denial of the motion and striking it from the record because it contained insufficiently shielded photographs of a child.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A temporary restraining order is reviewed under the court's discretionary authority. For ex parte injunctive relief under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1), the movant must provide specific facts clearly showing immediate and irreparable injury before the adverse party can be heard and must certify efforts to provide notice and reasons notice should not be required.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential

TOPICS

injunctions

civil procedure

family law

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

family law

injunctive relief

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether plaintiffs satisfied the requirements for an emergency temporary restraining order under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1).
2. Whether the motion should be stricken because it contained photographs of a child whose identity was not sufficiently shielded.

HOLDINGS

1. Plaintiffs failed to establish that emergency TRO relief was appropriate because they did not provide the required specific facts clearly showing immediate and irreparable injury and did not certify their efforts to provide notice or why notice should not be required.
2. The magistrate judge recommended striking the motion because it contained photographs of a child whose identity had not been sufficiently shielded.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“First, Plaintiffs must present “specific facts in an affidavit or verified complaint” which “clearly show that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to [Plaintiffs] before the adverse party can be heard in opposition.”” (2)

“Second, Plaintiffs must certify in writing “any efforts made to give notice [to Defendants] and the reasons why it should not be required.”” (2)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiffs challenged decisions by the Berrien County Family Court involving a child and expressed concern about alleged harm to the plaintiffs and a minor child. Their emergency TRO motion did not clearly identify the precise action they wanted the federal court to take. The motion lacked the required showing of immediate and irreparable injury and the required written certification concerning notice, and it included photographs of a child whose identity had not been sufficiently shielded.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiffs sued several individuals and a private law firm concerning decisions by the Berrien County Family Court involving a child. Plaintiffs previously sought an order concerning the child's custody, which the court denied. Plaintiffs then filed the present emergency TRO motion. The magistrate judge recommended that the motion be denied and stricken, subject to objections within fourteen days.

DISPOSITION

CASES CITED

- Ohio Republican Party v. Brunner, 543 F.3d 357, 361 (6th Cir. 2008)
- Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140 (1985)
- United States v. Walters, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir. 1981)

OPINION

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT WESTERN DISTRICT OF MICHIGAN SOUTHERN DIVISION MICHELLA SMITH, et al., Plaintiffs, Hon. Robert J. Jonker v. Case No. 1:25-cv-1133 BRIAN S. BERGER, et al., Defendants. _____/ REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION This matter is before the Court on Plaintiffs' Motion for Emergency Temporary Restraining Order. (ECF No. 21).

Pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(B), the undersigned recommends that Plaintiffs' motion be denied. Plaintiffs initiated this action against several individuals as well as a private law firm. Plaintiffs' complaint (ECF No. 1) is thin on specifics but this much is clear.

The Berrien County Family Court recently made decisions involving a child with which Plaintiffs disagree. Plaintiffs previously moved the Court to order that an individual, presumably the child referenced in their complaint, be placed in the custody of one of three people. (ECF No. 8).

The Court denied this request on various grounds. (ECF No. 9, 14). Plaintiffs now move the Court to "grant an emergency TRO to be placed to protect the integrity of this proceeding and not allow any further irrefutable harm and injury to the plaintiff's and minor handicapped child ERSV." (ECF No. 21, PageID.97). While Plaintiffs' dissatisfaction with the actions and/or inactions of various state and local officials is palpable, it is unclear precisely what action Plaintiffs are presently requesting the Court take.

Regardless, Plaintiffs have failed to demonstrate that entry of a temporary restraining order is appropriate. The decision to grant or deny a temporary restraining order (TRO) falls within the Court's discretion. See Ohio Republican Party v. Brunner, 543 F.3d 357, 361 (6th Cir. 2008). Pursuant to Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65, the Court may order injunctive relief, without notice to the adverse party, only if two conditions are satisfied.¹ FED.

R. CIV. P. 65(b)(1). First, Plaintiffs must present "specific facts in an affidavit or verified complaint" which "clearly show that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to [Plaintiffs] before the adverse party can be heard in opposition." FED. R. CIV. P. 65(b)(1)(A).

Second, Plaintiffs must certify in writing "any efforts made to give notice [to Defendants] and the reasons why it should not be required." FED. R. CIV. P. 65(b)(1)(B). Plaintiffs have failed to

satisfy either requirement.

The Court is not unsympathetic to Plaintiffs' allegations or concerns, however, the Court simply cannot intervene in this matter on the present record. Accordingly, the undersigned recommends that Plaintiffs' motion be denied.

The undersigned further recommends that the present motion (ECF No. 21) be stricken from the record on the ground that it contains photographs of a child whose identity has not been sufficiently shielded. 1 Plaintiffs, who have not been approved to file electronically, have failed to demonstrate that the present motion was properly served on Defendants. 2 CONCLUSION Accordingly, the undersigned recommends that Plaintiffs' Motion for Emergency Temporary Restraining Order (ECF No. 21) be denied.

The undersigned further recommends that the present motion (ECF No. 21) be stricken from the record. OBJECTIONS to this Report and Recommendation must be filed with the Clerk of Court within fourteen days of the date of service of this notice. 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1)(C). Failure to file objections within the specified time waives the right to appeal the District Court's order.

See Thomas v. Arn, 474 U.S. 140 (1985); United States v. Walters, 638 F.2d 947 (6th Cir.1981). Respectfully submitted, Date: January 7, 2026 /s/ Phillip J. Green PHILLIP J. GREEN United States Magistrate Judge 3