

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

Lawrence Little v. Ije Ekweani, et al.

Little v. Ekweani, Civil No. 1:26-cv-00863-JRR (D. Md. May 1, 2026) · No. 1:26-cv-00863-JRR · Decided May 1, 2026

SUMMARY

The United States District Court for the District of Maryland denied Lawrence Little’s emergency motion for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction seeking emergency housing assistance. The court held that Plaintiff had not complied with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65’s notice and certification requirements and had not shown imminent irreparable harm, in part because the alleged homelessness had persisted for approximately three years.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Julie R. Rubin
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the District of Maryland
DECIDED	May 1, 2026
DOCKET	1:26-cv-00863-JRR
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Plaintiff moved for a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction before Defendants had been served. The court denied the motion without a hearing.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	A party seeking a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction must clearly show a likelihood of success on the merits, irreparable harm absent relief, a balance of equities favoring relief, and that an injunction is in the public interest. A TRO without notice additionally requires compliance with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65(b)(1).
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Lawrence Little v. Ije Ekweani, et al.

TOPICS

- injunctions
- civil procedure
- eviction
- landlord tenant

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure

injunctive relief

landlord-tenant

civil rights

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether Plaintiff could obtain a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction without serving Defendants or providing the written certification required by Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65.
2. Whether Plaintiff clearly demonstrated immediate and irreparable harm sufficient to support preliminary injunctive relief.

HOLDINGS

1. The motion for a temporary restraining order or preliminary injunction was properly denied because Plaintiff had not served Defendants and had not provided a written certification detailing his efforts to provide notice or why notice should not be required.
2. Plaintiff failed to demonstrate the immediate and irreparable harm necessary to support a TRO or preliminary injunction.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“As a TRO is “an extraordinary remedy,” it “may only be awarded upon a clear showing that the plaintiff is entitled to such relief.”” (Section II)

“Where there is a failure to comply with the requirements of the rule, the motion for a TRO must be denied.” (Section III)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Plaintiff alleged that Defendants' actions caused his wrongful eviction from Baltimore City public housing at 210 Douglass Court in Baltimore, Maryland. He asserted that he had been homeless for approximately three years and was currently living in a shelter. He sought emergency housing assistance through a temporary restraining order and preliminary injunction.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Plaintiff initiated the action on March 2, 2026, alleging claims arising from his purported wrongful eviction from Baltimore City public housing and asserting constitutional and state-law claims. The court later granted in forma pauperis status and instructed Plaintiff to complete United States Marshal Service forms for service, but Defendants had not yet been served when Plaintiff filed his emergency motion. The court denied the motion because Plaintiff failed to comply with Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 65's notice and certification requirements and failed to clearly demonstrate imminent irreparable harm.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- *Maages Auditorium v. Prince George's Cnty.*, 4 F. Supp. 3d 752, 760 n.1 (D. Md. 2014), *aff'd*, 681 F. App'x 256 (4th Cir. 2017)
- *Frazier v. Prince George's Cnty.*, 86 F.4th 537, 543 (4th Cir. 2023)
- *Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 555 U.S. 7, 20, 22 (2008)
- *Sci. Sys. & Applications, Inc. v. United States*, PWG-14-2212, 2014 WL 3672908, at *3 (D. Md. July 22, 2014)
- *Lee v. Meyers*, ELH-21-1589, 2021 WL 4804018, at *3 (D. Md. Oct. 14, 2021)
- *Candle Factory, Inc. v. Trade Assocs. Grp., Ltd.*, 23 F. App'x 134, 137–38 (4th Cir. 2001)
- *Quince Orchard Valley Citizens Ass'n, Inc. v. Model*, 872 F.2d 75, 80 (4th Cir. 1989)
- *Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC v. 6.56 Acres of Land, Owned by Sandra Townes Powell*, 915 F.3d 197, 216 (4th Cir. 2019)
- *Direx Israel, Ltd. v. Breakthrough Med. Corp.*, 952 F.2d 802, 812 (4th Cir. 1991)

OPINION

Little

PER CURIAM.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

FOR THE DISTRICT OF MARYLAND

LAWRENCE LITTLE,

Plaintiff, v. Civil No.: 1:26-cv-00863-JRR IJE EKWEANI, et al., Defendants.

MEMORANDUM OPINION AND ORDER

Pending before the court is pro se Plaintiff Lawrence Little's Emergency Motion for Temporary Restraining Order and Preliminary Injunction. (ECF No. 9, the "Motion.") No hearing is necessary. Local Rule 105.6 (D. Md. 2023).

I. BACKGROUND

Plaintiff initiated the instant action on March 2, 2026. (ECF No. 1.) By order of April 30, 2026, this court granted Plaintiff's Motion to Proceed in Forma Pauperis and instructed Plaintiff to complete the required United States Marshal Service ("USMS") forms to effectuate service. (ECF No. 10.) Therefore, Defendants have yet to be served. As far as the court can deduce, Plaintiff's allegations arise from his purportedly wrongful eviction from Baltimore City public housing located at 210 Douglass Court, Baltimore, Maryland. (ECF No. 1 at p. 7.) Plaintiff claims that, due to Defendants' alleged unlawful actions, he has experienced homelessness for the last three years and currently resides in a shelter located in Baltimore City. *Id.* at pp. 7–8. Broadly construing his Complaint, Plaintiff asserts claims against Defendants for wrongful eviction, reputational harm, loss of "enjoyment of life," spoliation of evidence, and defamation. *Id.* at pp. 8–9. He also asserts claims pursuant to the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and Article 24 of the Maryland Declaration of Rights. *Id.* at p.9. On April 27, Plaintiff filed the instant Motion, seeking

“immediate injunctive relief due to ongoing homelessness and the resulting threat to his health, safety, and ability to pursue this action.” (ECF No. 9 at p. 1.) Specifically, Plaintiff requests: (1) a temporary restraining order requiring Defendants to provide or facilitate emergency housing assistance; (2) a preliminary injunction maintaining such relief during the pendency of this case; (3) expedited consideration of this Motion; and (4) any other relief the court deems just and proper. *Id.* at p. 3.

II. LEGAL STANDARD

“The standard for a temporary restraining order is the same as a preliminary injunction.” *Maages Auditorium v. Prince George’s Cnty.*, 4 F. Supp. 3d 752, 760 n.1 (D. Md. 2014), *aff’d*, 681 F. App’x 256 (4th Cir. 2017). The party seeking a temporary restraining order (“TRO”) must establish (1) a likelihood of success on the merits; (2) that he will suffer irreparable harm if preliminary relief is not granted; (3) that the balance of equities favors entry of the injunction; and (4) that an injunction is in the public interest. *Frazier v. Prince George’s Cnty.*, 86 F.4th 537, 543 (4th Cir. 2023) (citing *Winter v. Nat. Res. Def. Council, Inc.*, 555 U.S. 7, 20 (2008)). As a TRO is “an extraordinary remedy,” it “may only be awarded upon a clear showing that the plaintiff is entitled to such relief.” *Winter*, 555 U.S. at 22. Importantly, the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure provide that a court may not issue a preliminary injunction without notice to the adverse party except in narrow circumstances. FED. R. CIV. P. 65(a)(1). The court may issue a temporary restraining order without notice to the adverse party only if “specific facts in an affidavit or a verified complaint clearly show that immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage will result to the movant before the adverse party can be heard in opposition” and the pro se movant “certifies in writing any efforts made to give notice and the reasons why it should not be required.” *Id.* 65(b) (1); see *Sci. Sys. & Applications, Inc. v. United States*, PWG-14-2212, 2014 WL 3672908, at *3 (D. Md. July 22, 2014) (explaining “[n]otice is not required for a TRO, but ... the movant himself, in the case of a pro se party, must ‘certif[y] in writing any efforts made to give notice and the reasons why it should not be required.’”). “Where there is a failure to comply with the requirements of the rule, the motion for a TRO must be denied.” *Lee v. Meyers*, ELH-21-1589, 2021 WL 4804018, at *3 (D. Md. Oct. 14, 2021).

III. ANALYSIS

As set forth above, Defendants have not yet been served in this action. Additionally, Plaintiff has not provided a written certification detailing efforts to serve Defendants or reasons why service should not be required here. The certificate of service attached to his Motion provides only that the Motion “will be served on all parties once service is authorized by the court.” (ECF No. 9 at p. 4.) Accordingly, Plaintiff has not complied with the Federal Rules governing preliminary injunctions and temporary restraining orders. See FED. R. CIV. P. 65; *Lee*, 2021 WL 4804018, at *3. Even if Plaintiff complied with the mandates of Rule 65 regarding service, the Motion otherwise fails to accord with the Rule because Plaintiff is unable to demonstrate, at the very least, that he is likely to suffer irreparable harm absent the requested preliminary injunctive relief. The Fourth Circuit

has recognized that “an inordinate delay in initiating a preliminary injunction proceeding may ‘indicate an absence of the kind of irreparable harm required to support a preliminary injunction.’” *Candle Factory, Inc. v. Trade Assocs. Grp., Ltd.*, 23 F. App’x 134, 137 (4th Cir. 2001) (quoting *Quince Orchard Valley Citizens Ass’n, Inc. v. Model*, 872 F.2d 75, 80 (4th Cir. 1989)). “[A]ny delay attributable to plaintiffs in initiating a preliminary injunction request, coupled with prejudicial impact from the delay, should be considered when the question of irreparable harm to plaintiffs is balanced against harm to defendants.” *Id.* at 138. Further, “to establish irreparable harm, the movant must make a ‘clear showing’ that it will suffer harm that is ‘neither remote nor speculative, but actual and imminent.’” *Mountain Valley Pipeline, LLC v. 6.56 Acres of Land, Owned by Sandra Townes Powell*, 915 F.3d 197, 216 (4th Cir. 2019) (quoting *Direx Israel, Ltd. v. Breakthrough Med. Corp.*, 952 F.2d 802, 812 (4th Cir. 1991)). Here, Plaintiff has not alleged specific facts to clearly show that he faces immediate and irreparable injury, loss, or damage. As explained above, Plaintiff avers that the alleged actions taken by Defendants have caused him to experience homelessness for the past three years and that he currently resides in a shelter. (ECF No. 1 at p. 7.) While the court does not minimize the seriousness of Plaintiff’s circumstances, the length of time that has elapsed prior to Plaintiff’s pursuit of injunctive relief undermines demonstration of the imminent, irreparable harm necessary to warrant a TRO or preliminary injunctive relief.¹ Plaintiff has thus not met his burden under Rule 65 and binding case law and, accordingly, neither a preliminary injunction nor a temporary restraining order is appropriate at this juncture.²

IV. CONCLUSION AND ORDER

For the foregoing reasons, it is this 1st day of May 2026, ORDERED that Plaintiff’s Motion (ECF No. 9) shall be, and is hereby, DENIED. Madam Clerk shall transmit a copy of this memorandum opinion and order to Plaintiff. /S/ _____ Julie R. Rubin United States District Judge 1 The court makes no findings as to the merits of Plaintiff’s allegations on the whole. 2 The court declines to address the remaining Winter factors.