

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA

Juan Ortega Morales, III v. M. McVay, et al.

Morales v. McVay · No. 2:24-cv-1647 KJM CSK P · Decided May 29, 2025

SUMMARY

The document contains findings and recommendations in a federal habeas corpus action under 28 U.S.C. § 2254. The magistrate judge concludes that all claims challenging the petitioner’s murder conviction, counsel’s effectiveness, and the voluntariness of his no-contest plea were unexhausted in state court. The court recommends denying the motion for a Rhines stay and dismissing the action without prejudice for failure to exhaust state remedies.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Chi Soo Kim
JURISDICTION	United States District Court for the Eastern District of California
DECIDED	May 29, 2025
DOCKET	2:24-cv-1647 KJM CSK P
DISPOSITION	other
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Findings and recommendations on a state prisoner’s petition for a writ of habeas corpus under 28 U.S.C. § 2254 and motion for a Rhines stay.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	The court independently analyzed whether petitioner fairly presented each federal claim to the California Supreme Court and applied the requirements for a Rhines stay: good cause for failure to exhaust, potentially meritorious unexhausted claims, and absence of intentionally dilatory litigation tactics.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	nonprecedential
PARTIES	Juan Ortega Morales, III v. M. McVay, et al.

TOPICS

- federal habeas corpus
- post-conviction relief
- ineffective assistance
- plea bargaining
- due process

PRACTICE AREAS

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether petitioner exhausted the federal constitutional claims raised in his § 2254 petition by fairly presenting them to the California Supreme Court.
2. Whether the California Supreme Court's citations to *People v. Duvall* and *In re Swain* indicated that petitioner's claims were procedurally deficient and could be cured through a renewed state habeas petition.
3. Whether petitioner was entitled to a Rhines stay and abeyance of the federal habeas petition.

HOLDINGS

1. A state prisoner must fairly present each federal claim, including its operative facts and federal legal theory, to the state's highest court before obtaining federal habeas relief. Petitioner failed to exhaust all claims raised in the federal petition.
2. A Rhines stay is unavailable where the petitioner fails to demonstrate good cause for failing to exhaust, potential merit of the unexhausted claims, and absence of intentionally dilatory litigation tactics.

KEY QUOTATIONS

"A petitioner may satisfy the exhaustion requirement in two ways: (1) by providing the highest state court with an opportunity to rule on the merits of the claim ...; or (2) by showing that at the time the petitioner files the habeas petition in federal court no state remedies are still available to the petitioner and the petitioner had not deliberately by-passed the state remedies." (at 2)

"These are defects that can be cured in a renewed state petition[, and] [s]tate judicial remedies are not exhausted in such a case." (at 9)

"A Rhines stay may be employed as to both "mixed" petitions—i.e., those containing exhausted and unexhausted claims—and petitions raising only unexhausted claims." (at 11)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Petitioner is serving a 15-years-to-life sentence after pleading no contest to second-degree murder under California Penal Code § 187(a) in Butte County Superior Court. His federal petition alleged ineffective assistance of counsel, due process violations, and an involuntary or otherwise invalid plea, including claims concerning malice, causation, his age, and possible defenses. Petitioner pursued two state appeals and filed a habeas petition in the California Supreme Court, but the state proceedings did not fairly present or properly develop the federal claims raised in the federal petition.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Petitioner challenged his 2018 Butte County Superior Court second-degree murder conviction and 15-years-to-life sentence. The magistrate judge previously determined that all claims in the federal petition were unexhausted and allowed petitioner to seek a Rhines stay. Petitioner filed a motion to stay but did not address the

Rhines factors. The magistrate judge recommends denying the stay and dismissing the action without prejudice for failure to exhaust state remedies, subject to objections and review by the assigned district judge.

DISPOSITION

other

CASES CITED

- Rose v. Lundy, 455 U.S. 509, 515-16, 518 (1982)
- Picard v. Connor, 404 U.S. 270, 275 (1971)
- Batchelor v. Cupp, 693 F.2d 859, 862 (9th Cir. 1982)
- Castille v. Peoples, 489 U.S. 346, 351 (1989)
- Duncan v. Henry, 513 U.S. 364, 365-66 (1995)
- Sweet v. Cupp, 640 F.2d 233, 237-38 (9th Cir. 1981)
- Pitchess v. Davis, 421 U.S. 482, 488 (1975)
- People v. Turrin, 176 Cal. App. 4th 1200, 1206-07 (2009)
- People v. Wende, 25 Cal. 3d 436 (1979)
- People v. Figueras, 61 Cal. App. 5th 108 (2021), vacated and remanded, 308 Cal. Rptr. 3d 642 (2023)
- People v. Serrano, 211 Cal. App. 4th 496, 501-04 (2012)
- People v. Duvall, 9 Cal. 4th 464, 474 (1995)
- In re Swain, 34 Cal. 2d 300, 304 (1949)
- Curiel v. Miller, 830 F.3d 864, 869 (9th Cir. 2016)
- McCarthy v. Frauenheim, 2017 WL 5972696, at *3 (N.D. Cal. Dec. 1, 2017)
- Kim v. Villalobos, 799 F.2d 1317, 1319 (9th Cir. 1986)
- Gulbrandson v. Ryan, 738 F.3d 976, 992 (9th Cir. 2013)
- Hemmerle v. Schriro, 495 F.3d 1069, 1075 (9th Cir. 2007)
- Rhines v. Weber, 544 U.S. 269, 277-78 (2005)
- Mena v. Long, 813 F.3d 907, 908 (9th Cir. 2016)
- Kelly v. Small, 315 F.3d 1063 (9th Cir. 2003)
- Martinez v. Ylst, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th Cir. 1991)
- Brady v. United States, 397 U.S. 742, 747 n.4, 748 (1970)
- Boykin v. Alabama, 395 U.S. 238 (1969)
- People v. Franklin, 63 Cal. 4th 261, 276-77 (2016)
- Cornego v. Lizzaraga, 2021 WL 616885, at *20-21 (E.D. Cal. Feb. 17, 2021), findings and recommendations adopted, 2021 WL 4478727 (E.D. Cal. Sept. 30, 2021)
- Smith v. Robbins, 528 U.S. 259, 265 (2000)
- People v. Archer, 230 Cal. App. 4th 693, 702 (2014)
- Reyn's Pasta Bella, LLC v. Visa USA, Inc., 442 F.3d 741, 746 n.6 (9th Cir. 2006)

OPINION

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT 9 FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF
CALIFORNIA 10 11 JUAN ORTEGA MORALES, III, No. 2:24-cv-1647 KJM CSK P 12
Petitioner, 13 v. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS 14 M. McVAY, et al., 15 Respondents.
16 17 I. INTRODUCTION 18 Petitioner is a state prisoner, proceeding without counsel, with a
petition for writ of habeas 19 corpus pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 2254.

For the following reasons, this Court recommends that 20 petitioner's motion to stay (ECF No. 7)
be denied and that this action be dismissed because 21 petitioner failed to exhaust state court
remedies as to all claims. 22 II. BACKGROUND 23 Petitioner challenges his 2018 conviction
from the Butte County Superior Court for 24 second degree murder in violation of California
Penal Code § 187(a) to which petitioner pled no 25 contest.

(ECF No. 1 at 1.) Petitioner is serving a sentence of 15 years to life. (Id.) The petition 26 raises
one claim, which identifies three legal claims: ineffective assistance of counsel, violation of 27
due process and violation of "Brady," which appears to refer to Brady v. United States, 397 U.S.
28 742, 748 (1970) (a guilty plea must be knowing, intelligent and voluntary).

(Id. at 5.) In support 1 of claim one, petitioner argues that counsel was ineffective for urging
petitioner to plead no 2 contest to murder because the evidence did not support a murder
conviction. (Id.) Petitioner 3 argues that involuntary manslaughter was a common conviction when
the victim was 4 unintentionally killed as a consequence of an aggravated assault.

(Id.) Petitioner argues that he 5 was 17 years old at the time of the incident and easily manipulated
by counsel during the court 6 proceedings. (Id.) Petitioner argues that counsel could have argued
that the victim died over 7 forty days after the incident, and that other factors could have caused
the victim to die including 8 medical negligence, COVID-19, the victim's age and pre-existing
medical conditions at the time 9 of the incident.

(Id. at 17.) Petitioner argues that there was insufficient evidence of malice 10 aforethought. (Id. at
19.) Petitioner argues that neither malice aforethought nor premeditation 11 played a role in his
case. (Id.) Petitioner argues that when a minor is solicited for sex by an 12 adult, per the California
"Castle doctrine," use of force was warranted because the solicitor did 13 not withdraw and
appeared capable of injuring petitioner.

(Id.) Petitioner argues that had he 14 gone to trial, it is reasonably likely that a jury would have
acquitted petitioner of murder and 15 found him guilty of manslaughter. (Id. at 20.) Petitioner
argues that the court did not consider 16 the youth offender factors in California Penal Code
sections 4801 and 3051.1 (Id.) Petitioner 17 argues that his plea violated Boykin v. Alabama, 395
U.S. 238 (1969) in that it was not knowing, 18 intelligent and voluntary.² (Id. at 21.)

19 III. DISCUSSION RE: EXHAUSTION 20 A. Legal Standard for Exhaustion of State Court Remedies 21 Under 28 U.S.C. § 2254(b), the exhaustion of available state remedies is required before 22 claims can be granted by the federal court in a habeas corpus case. See *Rose v. Lundy*, 455 U.S. 23 509, 515-16 (1982).

The exhaustion doctrine is based on a policy of federal and state comity, 24 1 In 2013, the California Legislature enacted a parole eligibility mechanism for juvenile 25 offenders. See *People v. Franklin*, 63 Cal. 4th 261, 276-77 (2016). California Penal Code 26 sections 3051 and 4801(c) were enacted in support of the new juvenile offender parole provisions.

See *Cornego v. Lizzaraga*, 2021 WL 616885, at *20-21 (E.D. Cal. Feb. 17, 2021), findings and 27 recommendations adopted 2021 WL 4478727 (E.D. Cal. Sep. 30, 2021). 2 Under *Boykin*, “the record must affirmatively disclose that a defendant who pleaded guilty 28 entered his plea understandingly and voluntarily.” *Brady*, 397 U.S. at 747 n. 4. 1 designed to give state courts the initial opportunity to correct alleged constitutional deprivations.

2 See *Picard v. Connor*, 404 U.S. 270, 275 (1971); see also *Rose*, 455 U.S. at 518. “A petitioner 3 may satisfy the exhaustion requirement in two ways: (1) by providing the highest state court with 4 an opportunity to rule on the merits of the claim...; or (2) by showing that at the time the 5 petitioner files the habeas petition in federal court no state remedies are still available to the 6 petitioner and the petitioner had not deliberately by-passed the state remedies.” *Batchelor v. 7 Cupp*, 693 F.2d 859, 862 (9th Cir.

1982) (citations omitted). 8 Regardless of whether the claim was raised on direct appeal or in a post-conviction 9 proceeding, the exhaustion doctrine requires that each claim be fairly presented to the state’s 10 highest court. See *Castille v. Peoples*, 489 U.S. 346, 351 (1989). A claim has been fairly 11 presented if the petition has described both the operative facts and the federal legal theory on 12 which the claim is based.

See *Duncan v. Henry*, 513 U.S. 364, 365-66 (1995). Although the 13 exhaustion doctrine requires only the presentation of each federal claim to the highest state court, 14 the claims must be presented in a posture that is acceptable under state procedural rules. See 15 *Sweet v. Cupp*, 640 F.2d 233, 237 (9th Cir. 1981).

Thus, an appeal or petition for post-conviction 16 relief that is denied by the state courts on procedural grounds, where other state remedies are still 17 available, does not exhaust the petitioner’s state remedies. See *Pitchess v. Davis*, 421 U.S. 482, 18 488 (1979); *Sweet*, 640 F.2d at 237-38. 19 B. Petitioner’s Appeals 20 1. Background 21 Petitioner claims that he appealed his conviction, although he does not attach any 22 documents from his state appeal.

(ECF No. 1 at 2.) Records from the California Court of Appeal 23 reflect that petitioner filed two appeals following his conviction.³ In case no. C090360, petitioner 24 filed a notice of appeal on

September 12, 2019.

The notes in the docket reflect that petitioner was appealing the trial court's denial of petitioner's request for sentence modification on restitution of 26 3 This Court takes judicial notice of the docket from the California Court of Appeal containing 27 the records of petitioner's appeals. See Fed. R. Evid. 201; *Reyn's Pasta Bella, LLC v. Visa USA, Inc.* 442 F.3d 741, 746 n.6 (9th Cir.

2006) (court may take judicial notice of matters of public 28 record not subject to reasonable dispute). 1 fines and fees. On October 24, 2019, counsel was appointed to represent petitioner in this appeal. 2 After receiving briefing from both petitioner's counsel and respondent, the California Court of 3 Appeal denied this appeal on June 12, 2020 as an appeal from a nonappealable order, citing 4 *People v. Turrin*, 176 Cal. App.

4th 1200, 1206-07 (2009). The docket from the California Court 5 of Appeal reflects that on July 23, 2020, petitioner filed a petition for review in the California 6 Supreme Court regarding the denial of appeal no. C090360 by the California Court of Appeal. 7 On August 26, 2020, the California Supreme Court denied the petition for review. 8 Records from the California Court of Appeal reflect that in case no. C090858, petitioner 9 filed an appeal on November 7, 2019.

On January 28, 2020, counsel was appointed to represent 10 petitioner in this appeal. On September 4, 2020, appellate counsel filed a brief pursuant to *People 11 v. Wende*, 25 Cal. 3d 436 (1979).⁴ On February 16, 2021, the California Court of Appeal 12 dismissed petitioner's appeal as abandoned, citing *People v. Figueras*, 61 Cal. App. 5th 108 13 (2021) (describing the *Wende* procedures applicable to postconviction petitions), vacated and 14 remanded, 308 Cal. Rptr.

3d 642 (May 31, 2023), and *People v. Serrano*, 211 Cal. App. 4th 496, 15 501-04 (2012) (dismissing appeal as abandoned where appellant identified no arguable issues and 16 sought *Wende* review). The docket from the California Court of Appeal does not reflect that 17 petitioner appealed this decision to the California Supreme Court. 18 2. Analysis 19 This Court finds that petitioner's two state court appeals did not exhaust any of the claims 20 raised in the instant petition.

As discussed above, in appeal no. C090360, petitioner appealed the 21 denial of his request for sentence modification on restitution of fines and fees. The instant 22 petition raises no claims regarding sentence modification on restitution of fines and fees. Appeal 23 no. C090858 did not exhaust any claims because petitioner did not file a petition for review in the 24 California Supreme Court following the California Court of Appeal's dismissal of this appeal.

25 /// 26 27 4 In *People v. Wende*, the California Supreme Court established a constitutionally sufficient procedure by which appellate counsel may inform the court of the nature of an appeal

and decline 28 to brief issues judged to be frivolous. See *Smith v. Robbins*, 528 U.S. 259, 265 (2000). 1 C. Petitioner's Habeas Corpus Petition Filed in the California Supreme Court 2 1.

Background 3 Attached to the instant petition is a copy of a habeas corpus petition addressed to the 4 California Supreme Court and signed by petitioner on April 3, 2023. (ECF No. 1 at 46-51.) This 5 petition does not contain a date filed stamp. Records from the California Supreme Court reflect 6 that petitioner filed a habeas corpus petition in the California Supreme Court in case no. S279510 7 on April 14, 2023.5 Attached to the instant petition is a copy of the July 12, 2023 order by the 8 California Supreme Court denying the habeas corpus petition filed in case no. S279510.

(Id. at 9 44.) Based on these records, this Court finds the copy of the habeas corpus petition addressed to 10 the California Supreme Court attached to the instant petition is the habeas corpus petition 11 petitioner filed in the California Supreme Court in case no. S279510. 12 Petitioner's habeas corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court contained two 13 claims for relief.

In claim one, petitioner described his grounds for relief as California Penal 14 Code § 1170.95 and ineffective assistance of counsel.6 (Id. at 48.) Petitioner argued that his 15 counsel was ineffective for advising petitioner to plead no contest to second degree murder 16 because evidence existed supporting a manslaughter conviction. (Id.) Petitioner argued that a 17 manslaughter conviction was a common verdict when the victim was unintentionally killed as a 18 consequence of an aggravated assault.

(Id.) Petitioner argued that the victim died over forty days 19 after the incident and that other factors could have caused the victim's death including medical 20 negligence, COVID-19, the victim's age and pre-existing conditions. (Id.) Petitioner argued that 21 he was 17 years old at the time of the incident. (Id.)

In claim two, petitioner described his 22 5 This Court takes judicial notice of the California Supreme Court's docket reflecting 23 petitioner's habeas corpus petition, case no. S279510. See Fed. R. Evid. 201; *Reyn's Pasta Bella*, 442 F.3d at 746 n.6. 24 6 Effective January 1, 2019, the California legislature restricted the circumstances under which a participant in an underlying offense may be found guilty of murder on a felony-murder or a 25 natural-and-probable-consequences theory, and added a new statutory provision, California Penal 26 Code section 1170.5, "which provides a procedure by which those convicted of murder can seek retroactive relief if the change in law would affect their previously sustained convictions." 27 *People v. Martinez*, 31 Cal. App.

5th 719, 722-23 (2019). Effective June 30, 2022, California Penal Code section 1170.95 was renumbered and can now be found at California Penal Code 28 section 1172.6. 1 grounds for relief as California Penal Code sections 1016 and 1018.7 (Id. at 49.)

In support of 2 claim two, petitioner claimed that he entered his guilty plea because he was told by counsel that 3 he did not have any defense to the crime charged and that petitioner was under the age of 18 at 4 the time. (Id.) 5 In the instant petition, various exhibits follow the copy of petitioner's habeas corpus 6 petition filed in the California Supreme Court: petitioner's abstract of judgment, felony 7 complaint, the probation officer's report, the record from petitioner's plea agreement and an order 8 by the Butte County Superior Court setting petitioner's motion for a Franklin Hearing on the 9 court calendar.

(Id. at 50-62.) It is unclear whether petitioner attached these documents to the 10 habeas corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court. 11 On July 12, 2023, the California Supreme Court denied petitioner's habeas corpus 12 petition, case no. S278510, by order citing *People v. Duvall*, 9 Cal. 4th 464, 474 (1995) (a 13 petition for writ of habeas corpus must include copies of reasonably available documentary 14 evidence) and *In re Swain*, 34 Cal. 2d 300, 304 (1949) (a petition for writ of habeas corpus must 15 allege sufficient facts with particularity).

(Id. at 44.) 16 2. Analysis 17 a. Claim Pursuant to California Penal Code Sections 4801 and 3051 18 In the instant petition, petitioner appears to claim that the trial court did not consider the 19 youth offender factors in California Penal Code sections 4801 and 3051. Petitioner's habeas 20 corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court did not raise a claim based on the trial 21 court's failure to consider the youth offender factors in California Penal Code sections 4801 and 22 3051.

Accordingly, this claim is not exhausted. 23 b. Claims Based on Alleged Ineffective Assistance of Counsel 24 In the instant petition, petitioner argues that his counsel was ineffective for advising 25 petitioner to plead no contest to second degree murder for the following reasons: 1) the evidence 26 7 California Penal Code section 1016 lists the six kinds of pleas to an indictment or an 27 information, or to a complaint charging a misdemeanor or infraction.

California Penal Code section 1018 allows "a defendant to withdraw his or her guilty or no contest plea...for good cause 28 shown by clear and convincing evidence." *People v. Archer*, 230 Cal. App.4th 693, 702 (2014). 1 supported involuntary manslaughter because there was insufficient evidence of malice 2 aforethought because the victim was unintentionally killed as a consequence of an aggravated 3 assault; 2) counsel could have argued that other factors could have caused the victim to die such 4 as medical negligence, COVID-19, the victim's age, and pre-existing medical conditions; and 5 3) counsel could have argued that, per the California "Castle doctrine," use of force was 6 warranted because the solicitor did not withdraw and appeared capable of injuring petitioner.

7 Petitioner's ineffective assistance of counsel claim based on counsel's failure to argue the 8 "Castle doctrine" is not exhausted because petitioner did not raise this claim in the habeas corpus 9 petition filed in the California Supreme Court. See *Gulbrandson v. Ryan*, 738 F.3d 976, 992 (9th

10 Cir. 2013) (“As a general matter, each unrelated alleged instance of counsel’s ineffectiveness is a 11 separate claim for purposes of exhaustion.”) (internal citations omitted); *Hemmerle v. Schriro*, 12 495 F.3d 1069, 1075 (9th Cir.

2007) (“all operative facts to an ineffective assistance claim must 13 be presented to the state courts in order for a petitioner to exhaust his remedies.”). 14 This Court next considers the California Supreme Court’s citation to *People v. Duvall* and 15 *In re Swain* as to the ineffective assistance of counsel claims raised in both the instant petition and 16 the habeas corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court: counsel was ineffective for 17 advising petitioner to plead guilty to second degree murder because 1) the evidence supported a 18 manslaughter conviction because the victim was unintentionally killed as a consequence of 19 assault; and 2) the victim died over forty days after the incident and other factors could have 20 caused the victim’s death including medical negligence, COVID-19, the victim’s age and pre- 21 existing conditions.

22 As discussed above, the California Supreme Court denied petitioner’s habeas corpus 23 petition by order citing *People v. Duvall*, 9 Cal. 4th 464, 474 (1995), based on petitioner’s failure 24 to include copies of reasonably available documentary evidence, and *In re Swain*, 34 Cal. 2d 300, 25 304 (1949), based on petitioner’s failure to allege sufficient facts with particularity.

When the 26 California Supreme Court denies a petition for writ of habeas corpus with citations to both *Duvall* 27 and *Swain*, the decision is “in effect, the grant of a demurrer, i.e., a holding that [the petitioner] 28 ha[s] not pled facts with sufficient particularity.” *Curiel v. Miller*, 830 F.3d 864, 869 (9th Cir. 1 2016) (alterations in original) (elaborating on the meaning of the *Duvall* and *Swain* citations in 2 California Supreme Court orders). “These are defects that can be cured in a renewed state 3 petition[, and] [s]tate judicial remedies are not exhausted in such a case.” *McCarthy v. 4 Frauenheim*, 2017 WL 5972696, at *3 (N.D.

Cal. Dec. 1, 2017); see *Kim v. Villalobos*, 799 F.2d 5 1317, 1319 (9th Cir. 1986) (“*Swain* is cited by the California Supreme Court to indicate that 6 claims have not been alleged with sufficient particularity. That deficiency, when it exists, can be 7 cured in a renewed petition.”). 8 The California Supreme Court’s citations to *Duvall* and *Swain* do not establish per se that 9 petitioner failed to exhaust his current claims.

See *Kim*, 799 F.2d at 1319. Rather, this Court is 10 required to “independently analyze the petition presented to the California Supreme Court to 11 determine whether [the petitioner] satisfied federal exhaustion requirements and alleged his 12 claims ‘with as much particularity as is practicable.’” *Barrera v. Att’y Gen. of California*, 473 13 F.App’x. 748, 749 (9th Cir.

2012) (internal citations omitted) (citations to *Swain* and *Duvall* 14 require a federal habeas court to independently analyze the state petition to determine whether the 15 petitioner satisfied federal exhaustion requirements and alleged his claims with as much 16 particularity as is practicable). 17

For the following reasons, this Court finds that the California Supreme Court's citation to 18 Duvall and Swain establish that petitioner failed to exhaust the two ineffective assistance of 19 counsel claims raised in both the instant petition and the petition filed in the California Supreme 20 Court.

In the petition filed in the California Supreme Court, petitioner pled no specific facts 21 supporting his claim that counsel was ineffective in advising petitioner to plead no contest to 22 second degree murder because the evidence supported a manslaughter conviction as the victim 23 was unintentionally killed as a consequence of an aggravated assault.

In addition, petitioner pled 24 no specific facts supporting his claim alleging that counsel was ineffective in advising petitioner 25 to plead no contest to second degree murder because the victim's death could have been caused 26 by other factors such as medical negligence, COVID-19, the victim's age and pre-existing 27 conditions. Both claims, as pled in the petition filed in the California Supreme Court, were vague 28 and conclusory.

Petitioner also failed to attach any documentary evidence supporting either of 1 these claims to the petition filed in the California Supreme Court. The documents attached to the 2 instant petition, which may have been attached to the habeas corpus petition filed in the 3 California Supreme Court, i.e., petitioner's abstract of judgment, felony complaint, the probation 4 officer's report, the record from petitioner's plea agreement and order by the Butte County 5 Superior Court setting petitioner's motion for a Franklin Hearing on the court calendar, do not 6 appear to support the ineffective assistance of counsel claims raised in both the instant petition 7 and the habeas corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court.

Accordingly, for these 8 reasons, this Court finds that the two ineffective assistance of counsel claims raised in both the 9 instant petition and the California Supreme Court are not exhausted because petitioner could 10 renew his petition in the California Supreme Court raising these claims with additional facts 11 and/or documentation supporting these claims.

12 c. Claim Alleging Involuntary Plea 13 In the instant petition, based on the citations to Brady and Boykin, petitioner appears to 14 raise claims challenging the voluntariness of his plea based on the alleged ineffective assistance 15 of counsel discussed above and, possibly, on the grounds that he did not understand the 16 consequences of his plea as he was under the age of 18 at the time he pled no contest.

In the 17 habeas corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court, petitioner did not clearly raise a 18 claim alleging violation of his federal constitutional rights based on the involuntariness of his plea 19 on these grounds.

However, in claim one of the habeas corpus petition filed in the California 20 Supreme Court, in the section titled "Supporting cases, rules, or other authority," petitioner wrote, 21 "Petitioner['s

rights to due process of law under the Fifth, Sixth and Fourteenth Amendments 22 were violated by permitting appellant to be convicted of one count of second degree murder on 23 the basis of a misleading negotiated plea.” (ECF No. 1 at 48.)

To the extent this language could 24 be construed as raising an involuntary plea claim based on ineffective assistance of counsel, this 25 Court finds that the California Supreme Court’s citation to Duvall and Swain establish that 26 petitioner failed to exhaust this claim.

As discussed above, petitioner’s ineffective assistance of 27 counsel claims raised in the California Supreme Court, on which the involuntary plea claim 28 appears to be based, were not exhausted because they were vaguely pled and not supported by 1 any documentation.

Accordingly, petitioner’s claim challenging the voluntariness of his plea 2 based on ineffective assistance of counsel is not exhausted because petitioner could renew his 3 petition in the California Supreme Court raising this claim with additional facts and/or 4 documentation supporting this claim. 5 This Court also finds that the citations to Duvall and Swain are also applicable to 6 petitioner’s claim challenging the voluntariness of his plea based on his age at the time of his plea 7 as this claim, as pled in the habeas corpus petition filed in the California Supreme Court, was 8 vague and not supported by any documentation.

Petitioner could renew his petition in the 9 California Supreme Court raising this claim with additional facts and/or documentation 10 supporting this claim. 11 As discussed above, claim two of the habeas corpus petition raised in the California 12 Supreme Court did not challenge the voluntariness of petitioner’s plea based on alleged violations 13 of petitioner’s federal constitutional rights.

Instead, claim two of the petition raised in the 14 California Supreme Court challenged petitioner’s plea based on alleged violations of California 15 Penal Code sections 1016 and 1018. For this reason, claim two of the habeas corpus petition filed 16 in the California Supreme Court did not exhaust petitioner’s claims raised in the instant petition 17 challenging the voluntariness of his plea.

18 For the reasons discussed above, this Court finds that petitioner’s claims challenging the 19 voluntariness of his plea are not exhausted. 20 IV. PETITIONER’S MOTION TO STAY 21 As discussed above, petitioner failed to exhaust all of the claims raised in the instant 22 petition.

In “limited circumstances,” the district court may stay and abey a habeas petition for the 23 purpose of allowing the petitioner to exhaust state remedies (a “Rhines stay”). See *Rhines v. 24 Weber*, 544 U.S. 269, 277 (2005). A Rhines stay may be employed as to both “mixed” 25 petitions —i.e., those containing exhausted and unexhausted claims—and petitions raising only 26 unexhausted claims.

See *Mena v. Long*, 813 F.3d 907, 908 (9th Cir. 2016). A Rhines stay is appropriate if (1) the petitioner has good cause for his failure to exhaust, (2) his unexhausted claims are potentially meritorious, and (3) there is no indication that the petitioner engaged in intentionally dilatory litigation tactics. See *Rhines*, 544 U.S. at 278. 2 On September 9, 2024, this Court found that none of the claims raised in the instant 3 petition were exhausted for the reasons discussed above.

(ECF No. 6.) In the September 9, 2024 4 order, this Court advised petitioner of the legal standards for a Rhines stay.⁸ (Id. at 8-9.) This 5 Court granted petitioner thirty days to file a motion for a Rhines stay. (Id.) 6 Pending before the Court is petitioner's motion for a Rhines stay. (ECF No. 7.)

In this 7 motion, petitioner fails to address whether he has good cause for his failure to exhaust his claims, 8 whether his unexhausted claims are potentially meritorious, and whether he did not engage in 9 intentionally dilatory tactics. (Id.) Based on petitioner's failure to address the Rhines factors, this 10 Court recommends that petitioner's motion to stay this action pursuant to Rhines be denied.

11 V. CONCLUSION 12 For the reasons discussed above, this Court recommends that this action be dismissed 13 because no claims raised in the petition are exhausted.⁹ 14 Accordingly, IT IS HEREBY RECOMMENDED that: 15 1. Petitioner's motion to stay (ECF No. 7) be denied; and 16 2. This action be dismissed based on petitioner's failure to exhaust state court remedies.

17 These findings and recommendations are submitted to the United States District Judge 18 assigned to the case, pursuant to the provisions of 28 U.S.C. § 636(b)(1). Within fourteen days 19 after being served with these findings and recommendations, petitioner may file written 20 objections with the court and serve a copy on all parties. Such a document should be captioned 21 "Objections to Magistrate Judge's Findings and Recommendations." If petitioner files objections, 22 8 The Court notes that the alternative procedure for staying and abeying a federal habeas petition 23 pursuant to *Kelly v. Small*, 315 F.3d 1063 (9th Cir.

2003), only applies to habeas petitions that contain exhausted as well as unexhausted claims for relief. Because the instant petition is wholly 24 unexhausted, a Kelly stay is not available in the present case. 9 Petitioner is cautioned that the habeas corpus statute imposes a one-year statute of limitations 25 for filing non-capital habeas corpus petitions in federal court.

In most cases, the one-year period 26 will start to run on the date on which the state court judgment became final by the conclusion of direct review or the expiration of time for seeking direct review, although the statute of 27 limitations is tolled while a properly filed application for state post-conviction or other collateral review is pending. 28 U.S.C. § 2244(d).

28 1 | he shall also address whether a certificate of appealability should issue and, if so, why and as to 2 || which issues. A certificate of appealability may issue under 28 U.S.C. § 2253 "only if the 3 || applicant has made a substantial showing of the denial of a constitutional right." 28 4 | U.S.C. §

2253(c)(3). Petitioner is advised that failure to file objections within the specified time 5 || may waive the right to appeal the District Court's order.

Martinez v. Ylst, 951 F.2d 1153 (9th 6 || Cir. 1991). 7 8 | Dated: May 28, 2025 4 aA Aan Spe | CHI
SOO KIM 10 UNITED STATES MAGISTRATE JUDGE 1] 12 13 Mor1647.156/2 14 15 16 17 18
19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 12