

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS FOR THE FOURTH CIRCUIT

Lauren Spurlock, Heather Smith, and Shawn Zmudzinski v. Wexford Health Sources, Inc.

Spurlock v. Wexford Health Sources, Inc. · No. 25-2038 · Decided May 4, 2026

SUMMARY

The Fourth Circuit reviewed certification of two classes alleging that Wexford Health Sources, Inc. failed to screen for and provide medication treatment for opioid use disorder to incarcerated individuals. The court remanded for the district court to determine whether the named plaintiffs had standing to represent the class seeking injunctive relief, because standing was raised for the first time on appeal and required fact-finding. The court affirmed certification of the damages class, holding that the district court did not abuse its discretion in finding the class ascertainable and satisfying Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23.

CASE DETAILS

COURT	United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
WRITING FOR THE COURT	Judge Berner; Judge Benjamin; Senior District Judge John A. Gibney, Jr., sitting by designation
JURISDICTION	United States Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit
DECIDED	May 4, 2026
DOCKET	25-2038
DISPOSITION	reversed_and_remanded
PROCEDURAL POSTURE	Wexford appealed under Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23(f) from the district court's order certifying a damages class under Rule 23(b)(3) and an injunctive-relief class under Rule 23(b)(2). The Fourth Circuit affirmed certification of the damages class but remanded for the district court to consider whether the named plaintiffs had standing to represent the injunctive-relief class.
STANDARD OF REVIEW	Class-certification decisions are reviewed for abuse of discretion. Factual findings are reviewed for clear error, and legal errors include materially misapplying the requirements of Federal Rule of Civil Procedure 23.
PRECEDENTIAL VALUE	Published and precedential Fourth Circuit opinion.

PARTIES

Wexford Health Sources, Inc. v. Lauren Spurlock, Heather Smith,
Shawn Zmudzinski

TOPICS

class actions standing interlocutory appeal appellate procedure civil procedure

PRACTICE AREAS

civil procedure appellate procedure constitutional law civil rights health law remedies

QUESTIONS PRESENTED

1. Whether the named plaintiffs had standing to represent the class seeking injunctive relief after their detention or incarceration ended.
2. Whether the district court abused its discretion by finding the damages class ascertainable and satisfying Rule 23(a)'s numerosity, commonality, typicality, and adequacy requirements.
3. Whether the damages class satisfied Rule 23(b)(3)'s predominance and superiority requirements.
4. Whether the possibility that some unnamed class members might be uninjured defeated Article III justiciability or class certification.
5. Whether the district court improperly failed to resolve merits issues concerning Wexford's policymaking authority and the existence of constitutional injury at the class-certification stage.

HOLDINGS

1. Because standing was raised for the first time on appeal and the standing inquiry required factfinding concerning the named plaintiffs' likelihood of again being subjected to Wexford's alleged policy, the district court should consider in the first instance whether the named plaintiffs have standing to represent the injunctive-relief class.
2. The damages class was ascertainable because class members could be identified through Wexford's patient records using documented diagnoses, MOUD prescriptions, or withdrawal monitoring.
3. The district court did not abuse its discretion in finding that the damages class satisfied Rule 23(a)'s commonality, typicality, and adequacy requirements.
4. The damages class satisfied Rule 23(b)(3)'s predominance and superiority requirements.
5. At the class-certification stage, the district court need not determine that every unnamed class member possesses Article III standing, so long as the named representative has standing. The possibility of uninjured members is instead considered, where relevant, under Rule 23, including predominance; mere conjecture about hypothetical uninjured members does not defeat certification.
6. The district court did not abuse its discretion by declining to resolve merits questions concerning Wexford's ultimate policymaking authority or whether class members suffered constitutional injury beyond what was necessary to evaluate Rule 23.

KEY QUOTATIONS

“At the class certification stage, district courts therefore need not find that all of the unnamed class members possess Article III standing.” (27-28)

“Accordingly, where as here, a Named Plaintiff has standing to bring the claim that is the subject of the class action, Article III standing is satisfied at the class certification stage.” (28)

“While class certification analysis may “entail some overlap with the merits of the plaintiff’s underlying claim,” it is not appropriate to treat class certification as a merits-determination or to delve into the merits further than necessary to satisfy the requirements of Rule 23.” (30)

FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Wexford contracts with correctional institutions to provide comprehensive medical care. The plaintiffs alleged that Wexford excluded opioid-use-disorder screening and MOUD treatment from its comprehensive services unless an institution purchased those services under an additional contract, resulting in forced withdrawal for incarcerated individuals with opioid dependence. Wexford's guidelines changed over time to recognize the medical benefits of MOUD, but the plaintiffs alleged that the exclusionary policy continued at numerous institutions. The named plaintiffs were formerly detained or incarcerated at Wexford-contracted facilities and alleged constitutional violations under the Eighth and Fourteenth Amendments.

PROCEDURAL HISTORY

The plaintiffs brought a § 1983 class action alleging that Wexford maintained a policy excluding screening for opioid use disorder and medication for opioid use disorder from otherwise comprehensive medical services provided at correctional facilities. The Southern District of West Virginia certified two classes after narrowing their definitions. Wexford sought interlocutory review, arguing that the classes failed Rule 23's ascertainability, commonality, typicality, adequacy, predominance, and superiority requirements and that the named plaintiffs lacked standing to seek injunctive relief. The Fourth Circuit remanded the standing issue for initial consideration by the district court and affirmed the certification of the damages class.

DISPOSITION

reversed_and_remanded

REMAND INSTRUCTIONS

The district court must consider in the first instance whether the named plaintiffs possess standing to represent the Injunctive Relief Class. Certification of the Damages Class remains affirmed.

CASES CITED

- City of Huntington v. AmerisourceBergen Drug Corp., 96 F.4th 642, 647 (4th Cir. 2024)
- Heyer v. U.S. Bureau of Prisons, 849 F.3d 202, 209-10 (4th Cir. 2017)
- Short v. Hartman, 87 F.4th 593, 612 (4th Cir. 2023)
- Krakauer v. Dish Network, LLC, 925 F.3d 643, 654-58 (4th Cir. 2019)

- Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. v. Dukes, 564 U.S. 338, 349-51 (2011)
- Brown v. Nucor Corp., 785 F.3d 895, 902-03 (4th Cir. 2015)
- Career Counseling, Inc. v. AmeriFactors Financial Group, LLC, 91 F.4th 202, 206 (4th Cir. 2024)
- Berry v. Schulman, 807 F.3d 600, 608 (4th Cir. 2015)
- Gunnells v. Healthplan Services, Inc., 348 F.3d 417, 423 (4th Cir. 2003)
- Hutton v. National Board of Examiners in Optometry, Inc., 892 F.3d 614, 620 (4th Cir. 2018)
- Beck v. McDonald, 848 F.3d 262, 269 (4th Cir. 2017)
- Sharp Farms v. Speaks, 917 F.3d 276, 297 (4th Cir. 2019)
- Gerstein v. Pugh, 420 U.S. 103, 110 n.11 (1975)
- Jonathan R. ex rel. Dixon v. Justice, 41 F.4th 316, 325-26 (4th Cir. 2022)
- Davison v. Randall, 912 F.3d 666, 677 (4th Cir. 2019)
- Public Interest Legal Foundation, Inc. v. Wooten, 164 F.4th 362, 366 (4th Cir. 2026)
- Mr. Dee's, Inc. v. Inmar, Inc., 127 F.4th 925, 929, 934 (4th Cir. 2025)
- In re Marriott International, Inc., 78 F.4th 677, 685 (4th Cir. 2023)
- Williams v. Martorello, 59 F.4th 68, 86, 91 (4th Cir. 2023)
- Lienhart v. Dryvit Systems, Inc., 255 F.3d 138, 146 (4th Cir. 2001)
- Deiter v. Microsoft Corp., 436 F.3d 461, 467 (4th Cir. 2006)
- Parsons v. Ryan, 754 F.3d 657, 678 (9th Cir. 2014)
- Postawko v. Missouri Department of Corrections, 910 F.3d 1030, 1034, 1038-39 (8th Cir. 2018)
- Amchem Products, Inc. v. Windsor, 521 U.S. 591, 594, 623, 625 (1997)
- EQT Production Co. v. Adair, 764 F.3d 347, 358, 366 (4th Cir. 2014)
- Ross v. Gossett, 33 F.4th 433, 438-39 (7th Cir. 2022)
- Comcast Corp. v. Behrend, 569 U.S. 27, 35 (2013)
- In re Zetia (Ezetimibe) Antitrust Litigation, 7 F.4th 227, 237 (4th Cir. 2021)
- Lujan v. Defenders of Wildlife, 504 U.S. 555, 560 (1992)
- Fernandez v. RentGrow, Inc., 116 F.4th 288, 295 (4th Cir. 2024)
- Baehr v. Creig Northrop Team, P.C., 953 F.3d 244, 252-53 (4th Cir. 2020)
- Carolina Youth Action Project v. Wilson, 60 F.4th 770, 779 (4th Cir. 2023)
- TransUnion LLC v. Ramirez, 594 U.S. 413, 431 & n.4 (2021)
- Holmes v. Elephant Insurance Co., 156 F.4th 413, 431 (4th Cir. 2025)
- Spokeo, Inc. v. Robins, 578 U.S. 330, 338 (2016)
- Wells v. Johnson, 150 F.4th 289, 298 (4th Cir. 2025)
- Kohen v. Pacific Investment Management Co., 571 F.3d 672, 676 (7th Cir. 2009)
- Alig v. Rocket Mortgage, LLC, 126 F.4th 965, 974 (4th Cir. 2025)
- Huber v. Simon's Agency, Inc., 84 F.4th 132, 156-58 (3d Cir. 2023)
- Halliburton Co. v. Erica P. John Fund, Inc., 573 U.S. 258, 276 (2014)
- Amgen Inc. v. Connecticut Retirement Plans & Trust Funds, 568 U.S. 455, 465-66, 479 n.9 (2013)

- *Elegant Massage, LLC v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Insurance Co.*, 95 F.4th 181, 188 (4th Cir. 2024)
- *Glover v. EQT Corp.*, 151 F.4th 613, 618 (4th Cir. 2025)

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