

**Fifth Circuit Court of Appeal
State of Louisiana**

No. 26-K-146

STATE OF LOUISIANA

versus

JAMAL C. HARRIS

IN RE JAMAL C. HARRIS

APPLYING FOR SUPERVISORY WRIT FROM THE TWENTY-FOURTH JUDICIAL DISTRICT COURT, PARISH OF JEFFERSON, STATE OF LOUISIANA, DIRECTED TO THE HONORABLE DONALD A. ROWAN, JR., DIVISION "L", No. 20-5861

TRUE COPY

April 15, 2026



LINDA TRAN
DEPUTY CLERK

Panel composed of Judges Jude G. Gravois,
John J. Molaison, Jr., and Timothy S. Marcel

WRIT DENIED

Relator, Jamal C. Harris, seeks review of the trial court's March 17, 2026, order denying his Motion to Allow Expert Witness to Testify Remotely by Zoom.

Relator is charged by grand jury indictment with two counts of second degree murder for the October 3, 2020 deaths of Jessica Troulliet and Robert Templet, one count of obstruction of justice related to tampering with evidence in connection with a murder investigation, and two counts of possession of a firearm by a convicted felon tied to conduct on or about October 3 and October 21, 2020.

This matter is set for bench trial on April 20, 2026.

On March 11, 2026, the State filed notice of its intent to call an expert witness at trial. The witness, J.D. Parker, according to the notice, will be tendered by the State as an expert in the fields of mobile device forensics and cellular network and geolocation analysis, and is

expected to testify regarding the location of Relator at pertinent times during the investigation.

On March 16, 2026, the defense filed a notice of intent to call David Azar as an expert witness at trial. The defense's notice of intent states Mr. Azer will be tendered as "an expert in the field of interpretation and forensic analysis of call detail records, historical geolocation and cell site analysis, cellular network architecture." According to the notice of intent, the defense anticipates Mr. Azer will testify to the general locations of six individuals, including relator, at times pertinent to the case.

Contemporaneous to the filing of his notice of intent, the defense filed an *ex-parte* motion to allow Mr. Azer to testify remotely over Zoom. The defense's motion reports that Mr. Azer lives outside Louisiana and describes costs associated with presenting his testimony live in court as a substantial, unnecessary expenditure of public resources.¹ The motion was denied by the trial court on March 17, 2026.

In his application, Relator argues that the denial of his motion to allow remote expert testimony at trial over Zoom was an abuse of discretion. Relator avers that remote simultaneous audio and visual testimony is permissible under statutory and jurisprudential laws, as well as court rule. The trial court's decision, Relator asserts, deprives him of Sixth Amendment rights as he is indigent and the cost for securing the witness's live testimony would be an excessive financial burden on the entities responsible for providing representation to indigent criminal defendants.

Trial courts possess broad discretion in fulfilling their duty to conduct criminal proceedings in an orderly and expeditious manner to ensure justice is done. La. C.Cr.P. art. 17. In this case, the trial court's ruling does not prohibit Relator's witness from testifying at trial. Rather, the trial court ruled that the trial testimony must be in-person. Upon review of the application, Relator has failed to show compelling circumstances requiring remote testimony.

Accordingly, Relator has failed to show that the trial court abused its discretion in denying the motion. The writ is denied.

Gretna, Louisiana, this 15th day of April, 2026.

TSM
JGG

¹ In an email to defense counsel dated March 12, 2026, the assistant district attorney reported an objection to permitting a defense expert to appear and testify over Zoom.

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MOLAISON, J., CONCURS WITH REASONS

The trial court has clear discretion to allow a witness to testify remotely under La. R.S. 15:502, and I agree that the relator has not demonstrated an abuse of that discretion in his writ application. I write separately because I believe permitting this expert to testify via Zoom is both wise and appropriate. The defendant is represented by the indigent defender board ("IDB"), which operates on a notoriously limited statewide budget. Indigent defendants typically have access to only minimal resources. Allowing the defendant to avoid the significant additional expense of bringing in his own expert by using available technology is a practical, cost-saving solution. This approach conserves funds that can be used for other critical aspects of the defense.

However, in this case, the relator did not estimate the cost of bringing his expert to testify in person. It is also unclear whether other options, such as using a local expert witness, are available to provide expert testimony.

For these reasons, I respectfully concur with the majority disposition.

JJM

SUSAN M. CHEHARDY
CHIEF JUDGE

FREDERICKA H. WICKER
JUDE G. GRAVOIS
MARC E. JOHNSON
STEPHEN J. WINDHORST
JOHN J. MOLAISSON, JR.
SCOTT U. SCHLEGEL
TIMOTHY S. MARCEL

JUDGES



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SUSAN S. BUCHHOLZ
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FIRST DEPUTY CLERK

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NOTICE OF DISPOSITION CERTIFICATE OF DELIVERY

I CERTIFY THAT A COPY OF THE DISPOSITION IN THE FOREGOING MATTER HAS BEEN TRANSMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH **UNIFORM RULES - COURT OF APPEAL, RULE 4-6** THIS DAY **04/15/2026** TO THE TRIAL JUDGE, THE TRIAL COURT CLERK OF COURT, AND AT LEAST ONE OF THE COUNSEL OF RECORD FOR EACH PARTY, AND TO EACH PARTY NOT REPRESENTED BY COUNSEL, AS LISTED BELOW:

CURTIS B. PURSELL
CLERK OF COURT

26-K-146

E-NOTIFIED

24th Judicial District Court (Clerk)

Honorable Donald A. Rowan, Jr. (DISTRICT JUDGE)

Christen E. DeNicholas (Relator)

Thomas J. Butler (Respondent)

Mark D. Plaisance (Relator)

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