IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE DISTRICT OF SOUTH CAROLINA
SPARTANBURG DIVISION

Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Co., Plaintiff, vs. Kecia M. Howard; and Valentina Stepanova Howard, *individually and in her capacity as Personal Representative of the Estate of Joshua Alynn Howard*, Defendants.	Civil Action No. 7:24-cv-07178-TMC **ORDER**

This matter comes before the Court on the parties' Consent Motion for Deposit, Discharge, and Attorneys' Fees (ECF No. 26) requesting an Order: (1) directing Southern Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company ("Southern Farm Bureau") to deposit the sum of $400,000.00 with the Court's registry; (2) discharging Southern Farm Bureau from any further liability with regard to the proceeds or the policies and dismissing them from this action with prejudice; and (3) awarding $12,387.33 in attorneys' fees and costs incurred in bringing this action. After filing the consent motion, Defendants Kecia Howard and Valentina Howard agreed to mediate their dispute over the death benefit proceeds under the policies. On July 7, 2025, Defendants proceeded to mediation and settled their competing claims. Defendants agreed to split the funds equally, resulting in Kecia Howard receiving a 50% share of the proceeds, and Valentina Howard receiving the remaining 50% share.

Accordingly, following mediation, the parties informed the court by way of a proposed order that they seek to modify their Consent Motion to authorize the direct disbursement of the

proceeds to Defendants in accordance with the settlement. Having considered the foregoing and for good cause shown, the parties' Consent Motion is hereby **GRANTED**, it is **ORDERED**:

1. Southern Farm Bureau is hereby awarded its reasonable attorneys' fees and costs in the amount of $12,387.33 (ECF No. 26-1), which shall be subtracted from the policy funds distributed to the Defendants.

2. Within 30 days of the date of this Order, Southern Farm Bureau shall directly distribute the $400,000.00 in death benefit proceeds due under the policies, less the award of $12,387.33 in its attorneys' fees and costs, as follows:

a. $193,806.34 shall be distributed to Kecia Howard by check payable to "Kecia Howard" and mailed to: Michael J. Hoover, Interpleader Law, 5800 One Perkins Place Drive, Suite 2A, Baton Rouge, LA 70808.

b. $193,806.35 shall be distributed to Valentina Stepanova Howard by check payable to "KD Trial Lawyers and Valentina Howard" and mailed to: Ryan McCarty, KD Trial Lawyers, 178 W. Main Street, Spartanburg, SC 29306.

3. Upon distributing the death benefit proceeds in accordance with this Order, Southern Farm Bureau shall be, and hereby is, discharged from any further liability or obligation relating to the policies and/or the proceeds.

4. Each of the Defendants is permanently enjoined from instituting any action or claim against Southern Farm Bureau arising out of or in connection with the policies and/or the proceeds.

5. Southern Farm Bureau is hereby dismissed from this action with prejudice.

6. Thus, having been advised by counsel that this action has been settled as to Defendants, this action is hereby dismissed without costs and without prejudice. If settlement is not consummated within sixty (60) days, either party may petition the Court to reopen this action and restore it to the calendar. Rule 60(b)(6), F.R.Civ.P. In the alternative, to the extent permitted by law, either party may within sixty (60) days petition the Court to enforce the settlement. *Fairfax*

Countywide Citizens v. Fairfax County, 571 F.2d 1299 (4th Cir. 1978). By agreement of the parties, the court retains jurisdiction to enforce the settlement agreement. *Kokkonen v. Guardian Life Ins. Co.*, 511 U.S. 375, 381-82 (1994). The dismissal hereunder shall be with prejudice if no action is taken under either alternative within sixty (60) days from the filing date of this order.

IT IS SO ORDERED.

s/Timothy M. Cain
Honorable Timothy M. Cain
Chief United States District Judge

July 24, 2025
Anderson, South Carolina

I so move and consent.

/s/ Samantha LeJune
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