STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA COUNTY OF	IN THE GENERAL COURT OF JUSTICE SUPERIOR COURT DIVISION FILE NO.
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA	) DETERMINATED MET
v.	) PETITION FOR WRIT ) OF CERTIORARI
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Defendant	j

NOW COMES, the Defendant, , by and through undersigned counsel, Anton M. Lebedev, and respectfully requests that this Honorable Court reviews the 2 March 2021 order of Duplin County District Court, denying the *Defendant's Petition and Order of Expunction Under G.S. 15A-146(a) or G.S. 15A-146(a1)*. In support of his petition, Defendant alleges the following:

### STATEMENT OF FACTS AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

- 1. On 15 March 2010, Defendant was charged with two misdemeanors: speeding 86mph in a 70mph zone and driving with an expired registration card.
- 2. On 18 May 2010, Defendant entered a responsible plea to speeding 77 mph in a 70mph zone, an infraction. The charge of driving with an expired registration card was dismissed.
- 3. On 31 January 2020, Defendant filed a petition seeking the expungement of the expired registration charge and the original speeding 86mph in a 70mph charge in Duplin County District Court.
- 4. On 2 March 2021, the petition was granted on the expired registration charge but was denied on the original speeding 86mph in a 70mph charge. In denying the expungement on the original speeding 86mph in a 70mph charge, the District Court reasoned that the original 86mph in a 70mph charge was not dismissed.

#### **ARGUMENT**

I. Certiorari is appropriate to review lower court orders denying expungement relief.

"The authority of a superior court to grant the writ of *certiorari* in appropriate cases is . . . analogous to the Court of Appeals' power to issue a writ of *certiorari*[.]" <u>State v. Hamrick</u>, 110 N.C. App. 60, 65, 428 S.E.2d 830, 832-33 (1993). As our Supreme Court long ago explained:

[T]he Superior Court will always control inferior magistrates and tribunals, in matters for which a writ of error lies not, by certiorari, to bring up their judicial

proceedings to be reviewed in the matter of law; for in such case "the certiorari is in effect a writ of error," as all that can be discussed in the court above are the form and sufficiency of the proceedings as they appear upon the face of them. . . . It is . . . essential to the uniformity of decision, and the peaceful and regular administration of the law here, that there should be some mode for correcting the errors, in point of law, of proceedings not according to the course of the common law, where the law does not give an appeal; and, therefore, from necessity, we must retain this use of the certiorari.

State v. Tripp, 168 N.C. 150, 155, 83 S.E. 630, 632 (1914).

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"Certiorari is a discretionary writ, to be issued only for good and sufficient cause shown." State v. Grundler, 251 N.C. 177, 189, 111 S.E.2d 1, 9 (1959), cert. denied, 362 U.S. 917, 4 L. Ed. 2d 738 (1960). "A petition for the writ must show merit or that error was probably committed below." Id. (citing In re Snelgrove, 208 N.C. 670, 672, 182 S.E. 335, 336 (1935)).

"Two things . . . should be made to appear on application for *certiorari*: First, diligence in prosecuting the appeal, except in cases where no appeal lies, when freedom from laches in applying for the writ should be shown; and, second, merit, or that probable error was committed" below. <u>Snelgrove</u>, 208 N.C. at 672, 182 S.E. at 336 (citation and quotation marks omitted). Our Supreme Court has interpreted "merit" in this context to mean that a petitioner must show "that he has reasonable grounds for asking that the case be brought up and reviewed on appeal." <u>Id.</u>

Certiorari is the appropriate remedy to review lower court orders denying expungement relief. See State v. Frazier, 206 N.C. App. 306, 697 S.E.2d 467 (2010) (reversing grant of expunction when trial court erroneously applied statute to a conviction occurring before the effective date of the statute); In re Expungement for Kearney, 174 N.C. App. 213, 620 S.E.2d 276 (2005) (reversing order granting expunction of conviction and affirming expunction of dismissed charge); In re Robinson, 172 N.C. App. 272, 615 S.E.2d 884 (2005) (reversing erroneous expunction of multiple, unrelated offenses occurring over a period of years); In re Expungement for Spencer, 140 N.C. App. 776, 538 S.E.2d 236 (2000) (reversing order granting expunction to defendant who was over the age of twenty-one at the time of the offense); Order, State v. Neira, P19-380 (N.C. Ct. App. 3 Jul 2019) (granting certiorari to review order denying expungement petition). As the Defendant has shown probable error in the adjudication of the certiorari petition below, the writ of certiorari should issue. Snelgrove, 208 N.C. at 672, 182 S.E. at 336.

# II. The District Court erred in denying the Defendant expungement relief.

The issue before this Court is one of statutory interpretation. "The primary goal of statutory construction is to effectuate the purpose of the legislature in enacting the statute." <u>Liberty Mut. Ins. Co. v. Pennington</u>, 356 N.C. 571, 574, 573 S.E.2d 118, 121 (2002) (citations

omitted). "The legislative purpose of a statute is first ascertained by examining the statute's plain language." Id. at 574, 573 S.E.2d at 121 (quoting Correll v. Div. of Soc. Servs., 332 N.C. 141, 144, 418 S.E.2d 232, 235 (1992)). This Court gives the statute its plain meaning when the statutory language is clear, but when the meaning of the statute is ambiguous or unclear, this "must interpret the statute to give effect to the legislative intent." Frye Reg'l Med. Ctr., Inc. v. Hunt, 350 N.C. 39, 45, 510 S.E.2d 159, 163 (1999) (citing Burgess v. Your House of Raleigh, Inc., 326 N.C. 205, 209, 388 S.E.2d 134, 136-37 (1990)). Moreover, when "a literal interpretation of the language of a statute will lead to absurd results, or contravene the manifest purpose of the Legislature, as otherwise expressed, the reason and purpose of the law shall control and the strict letter thereof shall be disregarded." Id. at 45, 510 S.E. 2d at 163 (quoting Mazda Motors of Am., Inc. v. Sw. Motors, Inc., 296 N.C. 357, 361, 250S.E.2d 250, 253 (1979)).

A remedial statute is one "[i]ntended to correct, remove, or lessen a wrong, fault, or defect." Black's Law Dictionary 1319 (8th Ed. 2004). An expunction statute is remedial in nature as it gives individuals convicted of crimes "a second chance by not experiencing many of the stigmas associated with a criminal [charge.]" Taylor v. State, 7 N.E.3d 362, 367 (Ind. Ct. App. 2014) (cited for persuasiveness). Because expunctions are remedial in nature they are subject to a rule of liberal, rather than strict, construction and interpretation. 3 Norman J. Singer & J.D. Shambie Singer, Sutherland Statutes and Statutory Construction, Chapter §60:1 (7th Ed. 2014).

The North Carolina Supreme Court has stated that remedial statutes are subject to liberal construction. "[I]f a statute is remedial in nature . . . it must be liberally construed to effectuate the intent of the legislature." <u>Misenheimer v. Burris</u>, 360 N.C. 620, 623, 637 S.E.2d 173, 175 (2006) (quotation and citation omitted); see also <u>O & M Indus. v. Smith Eng'g Co.</u>, 360 N.C. 263, 268, 624 S.E.2d 345, 348 (2006) ("[a] remedial statute must be construed broadly").

Courts in other states have concluded that liberal construction should be applied to expunction statutes. Com. v. Giulian, 141 A.3d 1262, 1270 (Pa. 2016) (cited for persuasiveness); In re J.S., 223 N.J. 54, 84, 121 A.3d 322, 339 (2015) (cited for persuasiveness); In re Taliaferro, 856 N.W.2d 805, 808 (SD 2014) (cited for persuasiveness); Barker v. State, 62 Ohio St. 2d 35, 42, 402 N.E.2d 550, 555 (1980) (cited for persuasiveness); State v. Boniface, 369 So. 2d 115, 116 (La. 1979) (cited for persuasiveness); Cline v. State, 61 N.E.3d 360, 362 (Ind. Ct. App. 2016) (cited for persuasiveness); Thomas v. State, 916 S.W.2d 540, 543 (Tex. App. 1995) (cited for persuasiveness). The North Carolina Supreme Court has held that "liberal construction is that by which the letter of the statute is enlarged or restrained so as more effectually to accomplish the purpose intended." Causey v. Guilford Cty., 192 N.C. 298, 135 S.E. 40, 46 (1926). Stated otherwise, liberal construction "makes the statutory rule or principle apply to more things or in more situations than would be the case under a strict construction." Martinez v. State, 24 S.W.3d 10, 19 (Mo. Ct. App. 2000) (emphasis added) (cited for

persuasiveness). Because section § 15A-146 is remedial in nature, this Court should liberally construe that section to advance the remedy for which it was enacted. Causey, 135 S.E. at 46.

"If a person is charged with multiple offenses and any charges are dismissed, then that person or the district attorney may petition to have each of the dismissed charges Speeding over 15 miles per hour is a expunged." N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-146(a1). misdemeanor. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-141(j1). On the other hand, speeding under 15 miles an hour is an infraction. N.C. Gen. Stat. § 20-141(b). The reduction of the misdemeanor charge to an infraction is tantamount to the dismissal of the greater charge. Section § 15A-146 thus applies to later reduced charges analogously as it does to strictly dismissed charges.1

Consistent with the well-established legal principle that "[f]acts found under misapprehension of the law will be set aside on the theory that the evidence should be considered in its true legal light," Helms v. Rea, 282 N.C. 610, 620, 194 S.E.2d 1, 8 (1973) (brackets in original) (quoting McGill v. Town of Lumberton, 215 N.C. 752, 754, 3 S.E.2d 324, 326 (1939), and citing Davis v. Davis, 269 N.C. 120, 127, 152 S.E.2d 306, 312 (1967); Owens v. Voncannon, 251 N.C.351, 355, 111 S.E.2d 700, 703 (1959); and In re Gibbons, 247 N.C. 273, 283, 101 S.E.2d 16, 23-24 (1957)), it is most appropriate to remand this matter to the District Court for further determinations.

#### CONCLUSION

WHEREFORE, this Honorable Duplin County Superior Court should allow the Defendant's certification, vacate the order of the District Court denving the Defendant's expungement petition, remand this matter to the District Court for further proceedings, and grant the Defendant any and all other relief that it deems just and proper given the circumstances at hand.

This the 6th day of March, 2021.

Anton M. Lebedev Attorney for the Defendant TAW OFFICES OF ANTON LEBEDEV

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<sup>1</sup> Had the Defendant pled responsible to speeding pursuant to a separate statement of charges, this debate would not be happening. See N.C. Gen. Stat. § 15A-922. Nonetheless, this Court should not elevate form over substance.

#### **VERIFICATION**

I affirm, under the penalties for perjury, that the foregoing representation is true.

This the 6th day of March, 2021.

Anton M. Lebedev

Attorney for the Defendant

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## CERTIFICATE OF FILING AND SERVICE

I hereby certify that the attached <u>Petition for Writ of Certiorari</u> and attachments were filed and served upon others by mailing a copy via U.S. Postal Service to:

THIS the 6th day of March, 2021.

Anton M. Lebedev
Attorney for Defendant
LAW OFFICES OF ANTON LEBEDEV
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Raleigh NC 27609
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F: (855) 203 5125
a.lebedev@lebedevesg.com

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shown below to the petitioner, the State Boreau of Investigation, the agency and any other State or local government agency identified of	e Department of Public of Side One and on any	granted, a certified cop Safety, the Division of altrachment to this no	py of this Grder was sent on the date Motor Vehicles and to the arresting				
333 Name Type or print	gnature Of Clerk	17/04	App. CSC Assi CSC SEAL				
NOTE TO CLERK: If granted, atways send a certified copy of this Ords the NCAOC. Send copies for the arresting agency and additional agency. State Bureau of Investigation. NC December 16 Child Countries.	erunder seal to the petition	oner, to all the agencies	<del></del>				
State Bureau of Investigation Alth: Expunction Unit PO Box 29500 Raleigh NC 27626  Raleigh NC 27626  NC Department of Public Safety Attn: Combined Records Section 4226 Mail Service Center Raleigh, NC 27699-4226	NC Division of Motor	Venicles, Driver and ver Assistance Branch cation Unit nter	NC Administrative Office of the Courts Court Services Afth: Records Officer PO Box 2448				
NOTE TO PETITIONER: If this petition is granted, the clerk of supe	-		Final order for your records at the				

address listed on Side One. If you move, you must notify the clerk of superior court will send you a certified copy of the final order for your records at the expunged, the clerk of superior court will have no record of the case and will be unable to provide you with any documentation of the case. This includes the expunction order, it will be destroyed with the case file.