Circuit Court for Prince George's County
Case No. C-16-FM-23-004748

UNREPORTED

IN THE APPELLATE COURT

OF MARYLAND*

No. 1746

September Term, 2024

ISABELL TAILOR PROSPER

v.

ANDREW UCHEOMUMU

Graeff,
Leahy,
Kehoe, Christopher B.,
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

Opinion by Graeff, J.

Filed: May 30, 2025

*This is an unreported opinion. This opinion may not be cited as precedent within the rule of stare decisis. It may be cited for persuasive value only if the citation conforms to Md. Rule 1-104(a)(2)(B).

This appeal arises from an order issued by the Circuit Court for Prince George's County denying a motion filed by appellant, Isabell Prosper ("Mother"), to dismiss the complaint for child custody filed by appellee, Andrew Ucheomumu ("Father"). Mother alleged that Maryland was not the proper jurisdiction to hear the parties' custody dispute relating to their minor child and that she was not properly served.

On appeal, Mother, an unrepresented litigant, raises the following questions for this Court's review, which we have rephrased slightly, as follows:

1. Did the circuit court err in obtaining jurisdiction where no summons was served on Mother within 60 days, there was no written request for a renewal of summons, and there was no proof of service by a nonparty?

2. Did the circuit court err when the judge declined to recuse herself based on a personal and work relationship with Father?

3. Did the circuit court err in finding that it had jurisdiction over the matter pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law ("FL") § 9.5-201 (2019 Repl. Vol.)?

4. Did the circuit court err in failing to rule on motions and scheduling hearings?

For the reasons set forth below, we shall dismiss this interlocutory appeal.

FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

This case has a complicated procedural history, including a prior appeal to this Court, arising from the parties' ongoing child custody dispute. We recount only the filings and procedural history that are relevant to the issues in this appeal.

In our previous unreported opinion, *Ucheomumu v. Prosper*, No. 1141, Sept. Term, 2023, 2024 WL 1108666 (Md. App. Ct. Mar. 14, 2024), we discussed the procedural history of this case. We quote our discussion of the initial proceedings, as follows:

> On June 28, 2023, Father filed, in the Circuit Court for Prince George's County, a complaint seeking custody of the Child, who was born in 2019. When the complaint was filed, Father was living in Prince George's County, and Mother was living in Washington, D.C. Father's complaint alleged that the Child lived with him in Maryland and had been living with him for at least six months. Father further alleged that Mother was "very violent," and that she had other (older) children who had been removed from her care "for abuse, neglect and for their safety." Father asserted that, "[u]nder Md. Rule 9-101 physical custody must be denied to the Defendant." Father requested primary physical custody and sole legal custody of the Child.
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> On June 30, 2023, Mother filed a motion to dismiss Father's complaint for custody. Mother provided the following assertions in support, which we quote in full verbatim:
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> > Minor lives in Washington DC since 2019 – until current. Defendant committed parental (unintelligible) kidnapping by refusing to return minor after a 3 day visit, defendant committed domestic violence against me, lied and said I did to him. Made false statements to the court, officers in Maryland.
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> Attached to Mother's motion were three documents. The first document appeared to be an order from the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, which stated that Mother had filed for custody of the Child in that court on June 28, 2023, the same day that Father had filed for custody in Maryland. According to that document, the Superior Court had scheduled a hearing for June 29, 2023. The second document appeared to be a temporary protective order that had been entered in the Superior Court of the District of Columbia on June 28, 2023, on behalf of Mother against Father. The third document appeared to be an email exchange between the Superior Court of the District of Columbia and Mother regarding the hearing that was to be held in D.C. on June 29, 2023.
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> On August 7, 2023, the Circuit Court for Prince George's County entered an order granting Mother's motion to dismiss. Other than stating in the order

> that the decision was made "[u]pon consideration of Defendant's Motion to Dismiss Plaintiff's Complaint for Custody, and any opposition thereto," the court did not provide any explanation for its ruling. The court ordered that Father's complaint seeking custody be "**DISMISSED WITH PREJUDICE**."

Id. at *1-2 (footnote omitted).

We vacated the circuit court's order granting Mother's motion to dismiss and remanded the case for further proceedings. *Id.* at *3. We held that the allegations that Father set forth in his complaint were sufficient to state "a *prima facie* claim for custody of his biological child." *Id.* Additionally, we held that nothing in the record supported the circuit court's decision to dismiss Father's complaint with prejudice. *Id.*

On July 8, 2024, the Circuit Court for Prince George's County held a virtual hearing with Judge Kelsey from the circuit court and Judge Wellner from the Superior Court of Washington, D.C. Judge Kelsey noted that the purpose of the hearing was to resolve the "jurisdictional question," i.e., whether the case should remain in Maryland pursuant to the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act ("UCCJEA"). Judge Kelsey began the hearing by stating that she had a prior relationship with Father, noting that they had served together on the J. Franklin Bourne Bar Association as "board members for a few years," and they had "served together on quite a few committees." Judge Kelsey stated that she believed that she could be fair and impartial for the purposes of the hearing. Mother appeared to object, asking how long it would be until another hearing if she "was to decline" having Judge Kelsey preside. When asked for the reasons for her objection, Mother stated: "If [she] was to object it is basically because -- because [Judge Kelsey] had

a personal relationship with [Father]." Judge Kelsey noted Mother's objection, stated that the issue was merely a jurisdictional question, and clarified that her relationship with Father was professional, and she had not had any contact with him since serving together eight years ago. Judge Kelsey stated that she could be fair and impartial, and she declined to recuse herself. She advised, however, that if the case stayed in Maryland, she would not hear the case on the merits.

Mother and Father, unrepresented litigants,[1] presented conflicting testimony regarding where the Child was living prior to the filing of the custody complaints. One of the two guardian *ad litems* stated that neither of them had a position on the issue of which court had jurisdiction, but she noted that it was possible that the proceedings were further along in D.C. than in Maryland, and therefore, "it might mean that [Maryland] is an inconvenient forum. Just to get this done as quick as possible so that the child is no longer at the center of this dispute." Judge Wellner stated that this fact, which court was farther along in the proceedings, did not matter to the issue of "where the case belongs." Judge Wellner stated that the issue was compliance with the UCCJEA and what was the child's home state. Judge Kelsey stated that she would take the issue under advisement.

[1] Mother and the court indicated that Father was a lawyer who had been disbarred at the time of the proceeding.

On August 22, 2024, Mother filed another motion to dismiss. She argued that the case should be dismissed on grounds of (1) improper service and (2) a lack of jurisdiction pursuant to FL § 9.5-201.[2]

On August 28, 2024, Father filed an opposition to Mother's motion. He argued that proper service had been effected, and even if service was flawed, Mother had waived insufficiency of service. He asserted that the court was bound by this Court's holding in *Ucheomumu v. Prosper*, 2024 WL 1108666, "as the law of the case," that Mother's motion to dismiss "[was] *res judicata*," and that Mother was "collaterally estopped from relitigating the same issues."

On October 3, 2024, the court issued an order denying Mother's motion to dismiss. It ordered that Maryland was the appropriate jurisdiction to hear the custody case and would retain jurisdiction pursuant to the UCCJEA. The court stated the following regarding its findings:

> In all proceedings, it is the responsibility of the Court to weigh the evidence received. In that vein, this Court has concerns regarding the strength of [Mother's] position. First it is noted that [Father's] testimony regarding the residence of the child was more firm, concise and detailed. [Mother's] testimony, on the other hand, provided several suggested occasions that the child may have been with her, through several unidentified sources, but the Court did not receive the testimony regarding the child's residency as continuing in nature.
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> In addition to weighing testimony, this Court is also responsible for the assessment of the litigant's demeanor and credibility. On the issue of credibility, this Court is unable to find any inconsistencies in the testimony as provided by [Father]. However, the Court does have additional concerns

[2] Md. Code Ann., Fam. Law ("FL") § 9.5-201 (2019 Repl. Vol.), addresses when a court has jurisdiction to make an initial child custody determination.

> regarding [Mother's] credibility. First, when asked about her witness, [Mother] stated that he was a longtime family friend and driver, who had substantial historical knowledge regarding the child; who had frequent contact with the child; and who knew where the child lived. However, upon questioning, while the driver was able to testify as to some portions of the events that occurred on June 27, 2023, the driver identified [Mother] as "customer"; testified that he did not recall the child's name; was not able to definitively state where the child lived; and after testifying that he had driven the child many times, specifically stated that the number of times he had driven the child was actually limited to 2 or 3. The Court is also unable to ignore the fact that [Mother] has filed multiple Petitions for Protective Orders against [Father], raising serious allegations; that each matter has been heard before a different judge and that none of them have resulted in the granting of a permanent protective order.
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> Further, this Court had the opportunity to personally experience [Mother] completely mischaracterize a key piece of information, during a preliminary matter. More specifically, this Court found it necessary to disclose a prior working relationship with [Father]. Specifically, this Court advised all, on the record as follows: "I want to disclose I had a prior relationship with [Father]. We both served together on the J. Franklyn Bourne Bar Association. We were board members for a few years and served together on quite a few committees. Despite that, I believe can be fair and impartial." When the Court asked [Mother] if she had any objection, [Mother] stated as follows: "I wasn't aware of that until now. . . . that you had a ***personal*** relationship with [Father]. You served with him previously even though he is currently disbarred. I object because you had a ***personal*** relationship with [Father] . . ." In the event this Court's impartiality was called into question, [Mother's] mischaracterization on such a key point, could have raised a variety of unnecessary and inaccurate concerns and conclusions. So to[o] when it comes to the issue at hand. There is no more critical of a time, than in a Court proceeding, for [Mother] to show her ability to accurately receive, recall and relay information. Such abilities provide the Court with the confidence needed to find the testimony of the litigants credible. Unfortunately, and with respect to [Mother], this Court lacks such confidence.

The court found that "the child lived primarily with the father for the six (6) month period prior to the filing of the complaint, and therefore, the complaint was filed in

substantial compliance with the requirements of the UCCJEA." The court ordered that Maryland had jurisdiction over the custody dispute pursuant to FL §§ 9.5-201, -204.

This appeal followed.

DISCUSSION

Mother contends in her informal brief that the circuit court erred in denying her motion to dismiss. She argues that the court erred in: (1) failing to dismiss the case because she was not properly served with the complaint; (2) refusing to recuse; (3) determining that Maryland was the proper jurisdiction to hear the custody case; and (4) failing to rule on motions and scheduled hearings.

Father contends, preliminarily, that Mother's appeal is interlocutory and must be dismissed. On the merits, he asserts that the court did not err in denying Mother's motion to dismiss. He argues that the court had personal jurisdiction over Mother, and alternatively, that she waived personal jurisdiction and service objections, "misrepresented facts on the civil appeal information report" relating to the finality of the order, and her allegations of judicial bias are unsupported.

We begin with Father's argument that the appeal should be dismissed because the court's order is not an appealable order. "[U]nless constitutionally authorized, appellate jurisdiction 'is determined entirely by statute,' and therefore, a right of appeal only exists to the extent it has been 'legislatively granted.'" *Mayor & City Council of Balt. v. ProVen Mgmt., Inc.*, 472 Md. 642, 665 (2021) (quoting *Gisriel v. Ocean City Bd. of Supervisors of Elections*, 345 Md. 477, 485 (1997)). Pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Cts. & Jud. Proc. ("CJ")

§ 12-301 (2020 Repl. Vol.), parties have a right of appeal to this Court "from a final judgment entered by a [circuit] court," subject to exceptions. "The purpose of requiring parties to await final judgment before taking an appeal is to avoid 'piecemeal appeals,' which may result in disruption and inefficiency." *Huertas v. Ward*, 248 Md. App. 187, 200 (2020).

To be considered a final judgment, an order from the court must satisfy the following conditions: "(1) 'it must be intended by the court as an unqualified, final disposition of the matter in controversy;' (2) 'it must adjudicate or complete the adjudication of all claims against all parties;' and (3) 'the clerk must make a proper record of it' on the docket." *Waterkeeper All., Inc. v. Md. Dep't of Agric.*, 439 Md. 262, 278 (2014) (quoting *Rohrbeck v. Rohrbeck*, 318 Md. 28, 41 (1989)). *Accord Bartenfelder v. Bartenfelder*, 248 Md. App. 213, 230 (2020), *cert. denied*, 472 Md. 5 (2021). Here, the court's order denied Mother's motion to dismiss the complaint based on a lack of jurisdiction and improper service, and it ruled that Maryland was the proper jurisdiction to address the child custody dispute between the parties.[3] This order did not finally determine the merits of the child custody proceeding, and accordingly, the circuit court's order was not a final judgment. *See State v. Winegar*, 893 N.W.2d 741, 745 (N.D. 2017) (order that North Dakota retained continuous and exclusive jurisdiction pursuant to UCCJEA was not

[3] The Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act ("UCCJEA"), codified in FL § 9.5-101 et seq., addresses which state has subject matter jurisdiction over a child custody case that involves more than one state. *See Pilkington v. Pilkington*, 230 Md. App. 561, 578 (2016).

a final judgment because "it merely allowed the litigation to continue," and therefore, it was proper not to seek an appeal from that order).

There are, however, exceptions to the general rule requiring a final judgment prior to appeal. Exceptions that permit an immediate appeal from an interlocutory order are as follows: (1) an appeal from an interlocutory order specifically authorized by statute; (2) an appeal from an interlocutory order that falls under the collateral order doctrine; and (3) an appeal permitted under Maryland Rule 2-602. *Adelakun v. Adelakun*, 263 Md. App. 356, 370 (2024), *aff'd*, No. 35, Sept. Term, 2024, 2025 WL 1037399 (Md. Apr. 8, 2025); *In re C.E.*, 456 Md. 209, 221 (2017). *Accord Bartenfelder*, 248 Md. App. at 229; Judge Kevin F. Arthur, *Finality of Judgments and Other Appellate Trigger Issues* 52 (4th ed. 2025). We address each of these methods, in turn.

I.

CJ § 12-303

CJ § 12-303 provides that a party may appeal from certain interlocutory orders entered by the circuit court in a civil case. An immediate appeal is permissible where any of the following interlocutory orders are entered by the circuit court:

> (1) An order entered with regard to the possession of property with which the action is concerned or with reference to the receipt or charging of the income, interest, or dividends therefrom, or the refusal to modify, dissolve, or discharge such an order;
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> (2) An order granting or denying a motion to quash a writ of attachment; and
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> (3) An order:

(i) Granting or dissolving an injunction, but if the appeal is from an order granting an injunction, only if the appellant has first filed his answer in the cause;

(ii) Refusing to dissolve an injunction, but only if the appellant has first filed his answer in the cause;

(iii) Refusing to grant an injunction; and the right of appeal is not prejudiced by the filing of an answer to the bill of complaint or petition for an injunction on behalf of any opposing party, nor by the taking of depositions in reference to the allegations of the bill of complaint to be read on the hearing of the application for an injunction;

(iv) Appointing a receiver but only if the appellant has first filed his answer in the cause;

(v) For the sale, conveyance, or delivery of real or personal property or the payment of money, or the refusal to rescind or discharge such an order, unless the delivery or payment is directed to be made to a receiver appointed by the court;

(vi) Determining a question of right between the parties and directing an account to be stated on the principle of such determination;

(vii) Requiring bond from a person to whom the distribution or delivery of property is directed, or withholding distribution or delivery and ordering the retention or accumulation of property by the fiduciary or its transfer to a trustee or receiver, or deferring the passage of the court's decree in an action under Title 10, Chapter 600 of the Maryland Rules;

(viii) Deciding any question in an insolvency proceeding brought under Title 15, Subtitle 1 of the Commercial Law Article;

(ix) Granting a petition to stay arbitration pursuant to § 3-208 of this article;

(x) Depriving a parent, grandparent, or natural guardian of the care and custody of his child, or changing the terms of such an order;

> (xi) Denying immunity asserted under § 5-525 or § 5-526 of this article; and
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> (xii) Denying a motion to dismiss a claim filed under § 5-117 of this article if the motion is based on a defense that the applicable statute of limitations or statute of repose bars the claim and any legislative action reviving the claim is unconstitutional.

CJ § 12-303.

The court's order here, denying Mother's motion to dismiss for improper service and lack of jurisdiction pursuant to FL § 9.5-201, is not covered by any of these provisions. Mother's appeal, therefore, is not permissible as one authorized by CJ § 12-303.[4]

II.

Maryland Rule 2-602

Rule 2-602 permits the court, under certain circumstances, to certify an interlocutory order for appeal. *Waterkeeper All., Inc.*, 439 Md. at 287. The Rule provides as follows:

> **(a) Generally. —** Except as provided in section (b) of this Rule, an order or other form of decision, however designated, that adjudicates fewer than all of the claims in an action (whether raised by original claim, counterclaim, cross-claim, or third-party claim), or that adjudicates less than an entire claim, or that adjudicates the rights and liabilities of fewer than all the parties to the action:
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> (1) is not a final judgment;
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> (2) does not terminate the action as to any of the claims or any of the parties; and
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> (3) is subject to revision at any time before the entry of a judgment that adjudicates all of the claims by and against all of the parties.

[4] By contrast, in Georgia, a statute provides that "all 'orders in child custody cases' are directly appealable," and therefore, the Court of Appeals of Georgia held that an appeal from the denial of a motion to dismiss based on jurisdiction under the UCCJEA was appealable. *Cohen v. Cohen*, 684 S.E.2d 94, 95 (Ga. Ct. App. 2009) (quoting Ga. Code Ann. § 5-6-34 (2008)).

> **(b) When allowed. —** If the court expressly determines in a written order that there is no just reason for delay, it may direct in the order the entry of a final judgment:
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> (1) as to one or more but fewer than all of the claims or parties; or
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> (2) pursuant to Rule 2-501(f)(3), for some but less than all of the amount requested in a claim seeking money relief only.

As we have previously explained:

> Subsection (b), therefore, "authorizes a trial court to enter a final judgment 'as to one or more but fewer than all of the claims or parties' when the court 'expressly determines in a written order that there is no just reason for delay.'" *Grier v. Heidenberg*, 255 Md. App. 506, 516, 282 A.3d 342 (quoting Md. Rule 2-602(b)), *cert. denied*, 482 Md. 149, 285 A.3d 852 (2022). The order entering a final judgment, however, must be one "which, absent the circumstance of multiple parties or multiple claims, would be final in the traditional sense." *Schuele v. Case Handyman & Remodeling Servs., LLC*, 412 Md. 555, 568, 989 A.2d 210 (2010) (quoting *Plan. Bd. of Howard Cnty. v. Mortimer*, 310 Md. 639, 651, 530 A.2d 1237 (1987)). *Accord Med. Mut. Liab. Ins. Soc. of Md. v. B. Dixon Evander & Assocs.*, 331 Md. 301, 308, 628 A.2d 170 (1993) (A circuit court's finding of no just reason for delay "only makes a final order appealable. It cannot make a nonfinal order . . . into a final order.") (quoting *Mortimer*, 310 Md. at 654, 530 A.2d 1237).
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> If the circuit court properly exercises its discretion under the Rule and directs the entry of final judgment in a case to which the rule applies, the order is immediately appealable. *See In re Tr. Under Item Ten of Last Will & Testament of Lanier*, 262 Md.App. 396, 319 A.3d 1142, 1152 (2024) ("[I]mmediate appeals permitted under Rule 2-602(b)" are one of "three exceptions to the final judgment requirement."). Rule 2-602(b) certification, however, "should be used sparingly so that piecemeal appeals and duplication of efforts and costs in cases involving multiple claims or multiple parties may be avoided." *Murphy v. Steele Software Sys. Corp.*, 144 Md. App. 384, 393, 798 A.2d 1149 (2002) (quoting *Md.-Nat'l Cap. Park & Plan. Comm'n v. Smith*, 333 Md. 3, 7, 633 A.2d 855 (1993)). This process should be "reserved for 'the infrequent harsh case.'" *Id.* (quoting *Allstate Ins. Co. v. Angeletti*, 71 Md. App. 210, 218, 524 A.2d 798 (1987)). *Accord Heidenberg*, 255 Md. App. at 516, 282 A.3d 342 (quoting Arthur, *supra*, at 70, § 35).

Adelakun, 263 Md. App. at 381-82.

Here, there was no request for the circuit court to exercise its discretion in this regard, and the court did not enter judgment pursuant to Rule 2-602. Because of that, and because it is clear that the case does not involve a final judgment, Mother's appeal from the interlocutory order is not authorized by Rule 2-602.

III.

Collateral Order Doctrine

The collateral order doctrine permits immediate appellate review of some prejudgment orders that finally determine claims "separable from, and collateral to, rights asserted in the action [which are] too important to be denied review and too independent of the cause itself to require that appellate consideration be deferred until the whole case is adjudicated." *In re Franklin P.*, 366 Md. 306, 326 (2001) (quoting *Harris v. David S. Harris, P.A.*, 310 Md. 310, 315-16 (1987)). The collateral order doctrine should be applied "only sparingly." *Id.* at 327 (quoting *Sigma Reprod. Health Ctr. v. State*, 297 Md. 660, 670 (1983)).

To be appealable under the collateral order doctrine exception to the final judgment rule, the order must be one that:

> "(1) conclusively determines the disputed question, (2) resolves an important issue, (3) resolves an issue that is completely separate from the merits of the action, and (4) would be effectively unreviewable if the appeal had to await the entry of a final judgment." [*Stephens v. State*, 420 Md. 495,] 502 [2011], 24 A.3d at 109 (cleaned up). To qualify for immediate appealability under the collateral order doctrine, an order must meet all four elements. *See id.* at 502-03, 24 A.3d at 109. We apply these elements "very strictly" in keeping with the narrow nature of the exception, which should apply "only in extraordinary circumstances." *Id.* at 503, 24 A.3d at 109 (cleaned up).

In re M. P., 487 Md. 53, 68 (2024).

The circuit court's order, denying Mother's motion to dismiss for lack of jurisdiction pursuant to FL § 9.5-201 and for improper service, is not immediately appealable under the collateral order doctrine because it does not satisfy at least one of the elements of the test, i.e., the fourth element, which requires the issues to be effectively unreviewable on appeal from a final judgment. *See In re Franklin*, 366 Md. at 327 (for a prejudgment order to be appealable and within the collateral order doctrine exception, "each of the four elements must be met"). The requirement set forth by the fourth element of the collateral order doctrine "is met in 'very few [and] extraordinary situations.'" *Stephens v. State*, 420 Md. 495, 505 (2011) (quoting *In re Foley*, 373 Md. 627, 636 (2003)). A ruling is not effectively reviewable on appeal if our refusal "to hear an immediate appeal would effectively divest the appellant of a right not to have to go through proceedings in the lower court." Judge Kevin F. Arthur, *supra*, at 56. Examples of issues that are effectively unreviewable if the appeal had to await final judgment include the denial of a motion to dismiss on double jeopardy grounds, *In re M. P.*, 487 Md. at 68-69, and the circuit court's refusal to accept a stipulation of dismissal by all parties. *Milburn v. Milburn*, 142 Md. App. 518, 530-31 (2002).

In *Pittsburgh Corning Corp. v. James*, 353 Md. 657, 665-66 (1999), the Supreme Court of Maryland addressed an issue analogous to this case. There, the Court held that the denial of a motion to dismiss for *forum non conveniens* was not immediately appealable because the right not to stand trial in a particular court can "be vindicated after entry of

final judgment." *Id.* at 665. The Court based its reasoning, in part, on our decision in *Lennox v. Mull*, 89 Md. App. 555 (1991). *Id.* The Court summarized our holding in *Lennox* as follows:

> The court acknowledged that the appellant might, indeed, have to try his case in an inconvenient forum and retry it later in another forum if the issue were not resolved immediately, but that that inconvenience had to be balanced against two other factors: "one, that if appellant were to prevail in [the current forum], the issue of transfer will become moot and will never have to be decided on appeal; and, two, the inconvenience to the parties, both trial courts, and this Court of interrupting all proceedings below for upwards of a year to consider what is clearly a discretionary and interlocutory decision." [*Lennox*, 89 Md. App.] at 564, 598 A.2d at 851.

Id. at 665-66 (some alterations in original).

The Court stated that "the proffered right to avoid trial, either at all or in a particular forum, cannot be allowed to be the tail that wags the final judgment rule dog." *Id.* at 666. The Court noted that, to rule otherwise would cause "a proliferation of appeals under the collateral order doctrine," which would be "inconsistent with the long-established and sound public policy against piecemeal appeals." *Id.* (quoting *Bunting v. State*, 312 Md. 472, 482 (1988)). *Accord In re Franklin P.*, 366 Md. at 328 (circuit court's order denying appellant's motion to dismiss for lack of jurisdiction on the ground that the case should have been brought in juvenile court was not immediately appealable under the collateral order doctrine because it could be effectively reviewed following the entry of a final judgment). The collateral order doctrine does not permit Mother's appeal of the circuit court's interlocutory order.

Because the order appealed from is not a final judgment, and Mother has not shown that it falls within an exception to the final judgment rule, we will not consider the case on its merits. Instead, we shall dismiss the appeal.

APPEAL DISMISSED. COSTS TO BE PAID BY APPELLANT.