NOT PRECEDENTIAL

UNITED STATES COURT OF APPEALS
FOR THE THIRD CIRCUIT

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Nos. 25-2839 & 26-1368 (consolidated)

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DONELL L. PRINCE,
Appellant

v.

PRISCILLA PAJELA; JOHN DOE 1-10, fictitious persons responsible for damages

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On Appeal from the United States District Court
for the District of New Jersey
(D.C. Civil Action No. 2:22-cv-01939)
District Judge: Honorable Susan D. Wigenton

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Submitted Pursuant to Third Circuit LAR 34.1(a)
November 5, 2026
Before: SHWARTZ, PHIPPS, and CHUNG, *Circuit Judges*

(Opinion filed: November 12, 2026)

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OPINION*

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PER CURIAM

Pro se Appellant Donell Prince appeals the District Court's entry of summary judgment against him. We will affirm the District Court's judgment.

* This disposition is not an opinion of the full Court and pursuant to I.O.P. 5.7 does not constitute binding precedent.

I.

This case arises from a landlord-tenant dispute between Prince, who lived in a rooming house in New Jersey, and his landlord, Priscilla Pajela. Prince filed a civil action in the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey against Pajela and John Doe Defendants. Prince's amended complaint alleged that the defendants violated his civil rights, including those under the Fair Housing Act ("FHA"), and he brought claims under state law. Prince alleged that Pajela and others participated in intentionally exposing him to toxic "fumes/chemicals/drugs" to force him into moving out and prevent him from pursuing other legal actions.[1] *Id.* at PDF 5–6. According to Prince, his room was "flood[ed]" with various toxic substances that have endangered his health and safety. *Id.* at PDF 8–10. Pajela answered the complaint, denying any allegations of wrongdoing and raising state-law counterclaims.

When the case proceeded, Prince and Pajela had various discovery disputes. Prince requested to move for spoliation sanctions based on Pajela's alleged destruction of evidence in his former room. After a status conference, the Magistrate Judge denied the request, and the District Court affirmed that decision on appeal.

Meanwhile, Prince moved for leave to file a second amended complaint, seeking to remedy numbering issues, introduce new factual allegations relevant to the existing claims, and add claims against four defendants who Prince previously identified as John

[1] These other legal actions include those that Prince has pursued against Pajela in New Jersey state courts and a federal civil-rights action against police officers.

Doe. The Magistrate Judge allowed Prince to remedy the numbering issues and add factual allegations related to the existing claims, but he denied Prince's requests regarding the new defendants. The Magistrate Judge denied reconsideration of that decision, and the District Court affirmed the decision on appeal.

Eventually, Pajela moved for summary judgment on both Prince's claims and her counterclaims. The District Court granted the summary judgment motion as to Prince's claims and denied the motion as to Pajela's counterclaims. Prince appealed. Later, the District Court reopened the matter and declined to exercise supplemental jurisdiction over the outstanding state law counterclaims. Then, Prince filed another notice of appeal. The appeals have been consolidated.[2]

II.

We start with Prince's challenge to the denial of his request for spoliation sanctions. Prince argued that Pajela destroyed evidence of the toxic substances that she was using to harm him. Specifically, he alleged that Pajela refurbished his room after he was evicted, including by taking down plastic that he had installed to catch chemical traces, and Prince did not have the chance to have an expert test the room for toxic substances. The Magistrate Judge denied the motion, and the District Court affirmed, explaining that the evidence was in Prince's control before he was evicted, and he had ample opportunity to test the plastic, as he previously collected samples from respiratory

[2] We have jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1291. We may affirm the District Court's judgment for any reason supported by the record. *See Murray v. Bledsoe*, 650 F.3d 246, 247 (3d Cir. 2011) (per curiam).

mask inserts, utilized air quality detection devices, and gathered other data from the room. These reasons are all supported by the record, and we discern no abuse of discretion. *See Bull v. United Parcel Serv., Inc.*, 665 F.3d 68, 73, 79 (3d Cir. 2012); *Sharp v. Hylas Yachts, LLC*, 872 F.3d 31, 42 (1st Cir. 2017).

Prince also challenges the decision to deny him leave to add FHA claims under 42 U.S.C. § 3617 against: 1) Pajela's handyman; 2) another resident in the rooming house; and 3) Pajela's relative. Particularly, Prince argues that he plausibly alleged in his proposed second amended complaint that these individuals interfered with his fair housing rights by conspiring to flood his room with toxic substances. *See Revock v. Cowpet Bay W. Condo. Ass'n*, 853 F.3d 96, 112–13 (3d Cir. 2017) (explaining the elements of a § 3617 interference claim). But Prince did not adequately connect any of these individuals to the alleged scheme. Prince speculated that these individuals were involved in the conspiracy to harass him because: 1) he overheard the handyman discussing his plan to deny knowing about anything happening in the basement (the area that Prince asserted was the source of the fumes); 2) the rooming house resident was slated to testify against him in a state court landlord-tenant dispute, and toxic fumes would emanate from his window; and 3) Pajela's relative monitored the security cameras at the residency, had full access to the rooming house basement, and looked like someone who had previously threatened Prince. None of these allegations plausibly support Prince's contention that these individuals conspired to interfere with his fair housing rights. Thus, we will not disturb the decision to deny Prince leave to amend. *See Shane v.*

Fauver, 213 F.3d 113, 115 (3d Cir. 2000) (explaining that leave to amend is futile if "the complaint, as amended, would fail to state a claim upon which relief could be granted").

Finally, Prince argues that the District Court erred by granting Pajela's motion for summary judgment on his claims against her. Specifically, Prince challenges the District Court's conclusion that he failed to offer any competent evidence that Pajela exposed him to toxic substances. We exercise plenary review over the summary judgment ruling, *see Blunt v. Lower Merion Sch. Dist.*, 767 F.3d 247, 265 (3d Cir. 2014), and summary judgment is proper "if the movant shows that there is no genuine dispute as to any material fact and the movant is entitled to judgment as a matter of law," Fed. R. Civ. P. 56(a).

We agree with the District Court that Prince's proffered evidence failed to establish Pajela's involvement in his alleged exposure to toxic fumes and that his FHA interference claim could not survive summary judgment. *See Revock*, 853 F.3d at 112–13. Prince asserts that some of his other claims presented triable issues of fact, but he does not adequately explain how. *See Geness v. Cox*, 902 F.3d 344, 355 (3d Cir. 2018) (citation omitted) ("[A] passing reference to an issue will not suffice to bring that issue before this court."). Thus, we decline to disturb the District Court's entry of summary judgment.

III.

For the foregoing reasons, we will affirm the District Court's judgment.