

Circuit Court for Prince George's  
Case No. CT171583B

UNREPORTED  
IN THE COURT OF SPECIAL APPEALS  
OF MARYLAND

No. 2397

September Term, 2018

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ALONZO WARREN

v.

STATE OF MARYLAND

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Wright,  
Kehoe,  
Moylan, Charles E., Jr.  
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

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PER CURIAM

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Filed: October 1, 2019

\*This is an unreported opinion, and it may not be cited in any paper, brief, motion, or other document filed in this Court or any other Maryland Court as either precedent within the rule of stare decisis or as persuasive authority. Md. Rule 1-104.

Alonzo Warren, appellant, was convicted, by a jury in the Circuit Court for Prince George’s County, of maintaining a common nuisance for the storage of a controlled dangerous substance and maintaining a common nuisance for the storage of paraphernalia. Mr. Warren noted an appeal, in which he contends that the trial court erred in limiting his right to cross-examine a State witness. We shall affirm.

As the sole issue on appeal involves an evidentiary ruling, we include only a brief recitation of the facts that are relevant to our review of the disputed ruling. At trial, the State called Lieutenant Patrick Hampson of the Prince George’s County Police Department. Lieutenant Hampson stated that his department began an investigation of the “In Style Plus” store on St. Barnabas Road after receiving information that drugs were being sold by employees of the store. The police conducted surveillance of the store and used confidential informants to make controlled purchases of drugs from the store. Based on information obtained during the investigation, a search warrant for the store was issued and was executed on March 23, 2017. Mr. Warren, the manager of the store, was present when the warrant was served. During execution of the search warrant, police recovered narcotics, including cocaine, heroin, and PCP, in quantities indicative of distribution, as well as material for packaging illegal drugs.

Mr. Warren was brought to the police station to be interviewed. He denied knowledge that illegal drugs were present or that drugs were being sold in the store. He was released without being charged. Lieutenant Hampson explained that no one, including the owner of the store, was charged at that time because police “were following up [their]

investigation to several different directions, not just into the store, but into other avenues of investigation[,]” including “some other incidents” which included “violent crime.”

While police continued to investigate these “other[] matters[,]” it became evident that drug activity at the store had increased. A second search warrant was executed at the store on June 28, 2017, at which time police recovered more drugs and paraphernalia that were indicative of a distribution operation.

During Lieutenant Hampson’s cross-examination, defense counsel asked why no one was arrested after the first search:

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: Now, there was lots of talk of March 23rd 2017 and why you didn’t arrest anyone after that search and seizure, right? And you said it was to pursue other avenues, correct?

LIEUTENANT HAMPSON: That’s correct.

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: And when you say that you actually mean that you wanted to investigate a murder; is that correct?

LIEUTENANT HAMPSON: I mean, that’s certainly - - violent crime is one of our goals, so yes.

[DEFENSE COUNSEL]: Okay. And you decided not to arrest because [the store owner] - -

[PROSECUTOR]: Objection.

The parties were called to the bench, where defense counsel proffered that police did not arrest anyone after the first search warrant was executed because police made a deal with the owner of the store to provide information about his PCP supplier and information about an unrelated murder. The prosecutor stated that the proffered evidence was irrelevant and added that disclosing the store owner’s cooperation with police was

potentially dangerous for the store owner. The court agreed that the evidence was irrelevant and sustained the objection.

On appeal, Mr. Warren contends that the trial court improperly restricted his right to cross-examine Lieutenant Hampson. He asserts that the reason why no arrests were made following execution of the first search warrant on March 23, 2017 was “so that [the store owner] could provide information to [Lieutenant] Hampson for purposes of solving a murder and in exchange [Lieutenant] Hampson would forego charging of crimes and allow [the store owner] to continue operating the store.” Mr. Warren claims that “the defense sought to cross-examine [Lieutenant] Hampson on his motive to lie about the delay of charges and sought to have the jury assess his credibility in response to this line of questioning.”

The opportunity to cross-examine witnesses is central to a criminal defendant’s Sixth Amendment right to confront witnesses. *Kazadi v. State*, 240 Md. App. 156, 178, *cert. granted*, 463 Md. 637 (2019). “Yet a defendant’s right to cross-examine is not limitless, as judges ‘have wide latitude to establish reasonable limits on cross-examination based on concerns about, among other things, harassment, prejudice, confusion of the issues, the witness’ safety, or interrogation that is repetitive or only marginally relevant.’” *Id.* (citation omitted). “Thus, the scope of the cross-examination lies largely within the discretion of the trial judge.” *Id.* (citation omitted). “An abuse of discretion occurs when the trial judge imposes limitations on cross-examination that ‘inhibit ... the ability of the defendant to receive a fair trial.’” *Id.* (citations omitted).

We find no abuse of discretion here. Lieutenant Hampson testified that no charges were filed after the store was searched in March 2017 because police were pursuing investigation into other matters, which included a murder. We fail to see how allowing defense counsel to question Lieutenant Hampson on the details of the other investigations, including the store owner’s role in those investigations, would have discredited Lieutenant Hampson’s testimony or was otherwise relevant to whether Mr. Warren was guilty of any of the crimes with which he had been charged.

**JUDGMENTS OF THE CIRCUIT COURT  
FOR PRINCE GEORGE’S COUNTY  
AFFIRMED. COSTS TO BE PAID BY  
APPELLANT.**