If this opinion indicates that it is "FOR PUBLICATION," it is subject to revision until final publication in the Michigan Appeals Reports.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

COURT OF APPEALS

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, Plaintiff-Appellee,	UNPUBLISHED September 04, 2026 9:18 AM
v	No. 374819 Cass Circuit Court
SHANE MICHAEL WHITE, Defendant-Appellant.	LC No. 2024-010129-FH

Before: M. J. KELLY, P.J., and O'BRIEN and LIEVENSE, JJ.

PER CURIAM.

Following a bench trial, defendant was convicted of possession of methamphetamine, MCL 333.7403(2)(b)(*i*).[1] Defendant appeals as of right, arguing that there was insufficient evidence presented at trial to support his conviction. For the reasons set forth in this opinion, we affirm.

I. FACTUAL HISTORY

This case arises out of defendant's arrest on July 13, 2024, from a residence in Dowagiac, Michigan, where Melanie Butler and her two adult daughters, Hannah Haskins and Marissa Reyna, lived. Butler and her two daughters had known defendant for about 15 years, but he was banned from the residence beginning in 2024 due to Butler's concern that defendant and Reyna were using drugs.

Shortly after midnight on July 13, 2024, Haskins noticed that the security cameras in the residence had been manually adjusted to face the ceiling. Haskins informed Butler, and believing that there were unwelcome visitors in the house, Butler called the police. Deputy Thomas Wilson of the Cass County Sheriff's Department was dispatched to the residence with two other police officers, and Butler directed them to Reyna's bedroom. Luis Martinez, a friend of Reyna's, first

[1] Defendant was acquitted of one count of delivery or manufacture of methamphetamine, MCL 333.7401(2)(b)(*i*).

opened the door and was detained. Defendant was found hiding in the closet of the bedroom and was taken into custody. Reyna, who was in the bathroom adjacent to the bedroom when the police arrived, was detained immediately after.

At defendant's bench trial, Deputy Wilson testified that he processed the following evidence found in Reyna's bedroom: (1) a clear plastic tray with 13.75 grams of methamphetamine located on a mounted shelf across from the bedroom's closet; (2) five syringes with either "meth loaded or residue left within the syringe" found "between clothing on [the] clothing rack"; (3) scales that appeared to contain methamphetamine residue; (4) a knife with what appeared to be methamphetamine residue on it; (5) numerous phones; (6) a case with clear plastic baggies; (7) a glass vial with white powder residue inside; and (8) a glass pipe with methamphetamine residue. Deputy Wilson also testified that in a backpack outside of the bedroom door, he found "an open package of empty syringes [that] appeared to be similar to the ones located inside the room with the residue," "a wallet containing the ID of defendant," and "two unidentified pills." Deputy Wilson testified that he spoke to defendant after he was taken into custody regarding the incident that resulted in defendant's arrest and that defendant "repeatedly just stated that he was a drug user, not a dealer, and that he had used methamphetamine approximately 6 hours before" the police arrived at the residence.

In finding defendant guilty of possession of methamphetamine, the trial court stated:

> I think the Court does find that there was possession of these drugs. I believe that [defendant] did have the ability to exercise dominion and control over those drugs while he was in the room there with [Martinez], and that the—all the evidence, when we—when we bring it all together, shows that he did have the ability to control or have dominion over those drugs or at least some of those drugs, and so the Court would find that at the very least, a portion of those drugs would have been under the control of the Defendant.

Defendant now appeals.

II. SUFFICIENCY OF EVIDENCE

Defendant argues that there was insufficient evidence presented at trial to prove beyond a reasonable doubt that defendant had constructive possession of the methamphetamine. We disagree.

We "review a challenge to the sufficiency of the evidence in a bench trial de novo and in a light most favorable to the prosecution to determine whether the trial court could have found that the essential elements of the crime were proved beyond a reasonable doubt." *People v Sherman-Huffman*, 241 Mich App 264, 265; 615 NW2d 776 (2000). When reviewing a sufficiency claim on appeal, we "must defer to the fact-finder by drawing all reasonable inferences and resolving credibility conflicts in support of the . . . verdict." *People v Schumacher*, 276 Mich App 165, 167; 740 NW2d 534 (2007).

In a criminal case, the prosecution must introduce "sufficient evidence to justify a rational trier of fact in finding guilt beyond a reasonable doubt." *People v Wolfe*, 440 Mich 508, 513-514; 489 NW2d 748 (1992), amended 441 Mich 1201 (1992) (quotation marks and citation omitted).

The prosecution is not required to negate "every reasonable theory consistent with innocence" as long as the elements of the offense are proven beyond a reasonable doubt. *People v Nowack*, 462 Mich 392, 400; 614 NW2d 78 (2000).

"Circumstantial evidence and reasonable inferences arising from that evidence can constitute satisfactory proof of the elements of a crime." *People v Carines*, 460 Mich 750, 757; 597 NW2d 130 (1999) (quotation marks and citation omitted). As long as evidence is both relevant and admissible, "it does not matter that the evidence gives rise to multiple inferences or that an inference gives rise to further inferences," and all fairly drawn inferences from the evidence should be considered when considering the sufficiency of the evidence. *People v Hardiman*, 466 Mich 417, 428; 646 NW2d 158 (2002).

In the present case, defendant was convicted of possession of methamphetamine. A conviction under MCL 333.7403(2)(b) requires a person to "knowingly or intentionally" possess methamphetamine. See *People v Baham*, 321 Mich App 228, 247; 909 NW2d 836 (2017). "The element of possession in defendant's charges requires a showing of dominion or right of control over the drug with knowledge of its presence and character." *People v McKinney*, 258 Mich App 157, 165; 670 NW2d 254 (2003) (quotation marks and citations omitted). In *Wolfe*, 440 Mich at 519-521, the Michigan Supreme Court held as follows:

> A person need not have actual physical possession of a controlled substance to be guilty of possessing it. Possession may be either actual or constructive. Likewise, possession may be found even when the defendant is not the owner of recovered narcotics. Moreover, possession may be joint, with more than one person actually or constructively possessing a controlled substance.
>
> . . . The courts have frequently addressed the concept of constructive possession and the link between a defendant and narcotics that must be shown to establish constructive possession. It is well established that a person's presence, by itself, at a location where drugs are found is insufficient to prove constructive possession. Instead, some additional connection between the defendant and the contraband must be shown.
>
> Any one of various factors may be sufficient under given circumstances to establish this connection. . . . [C]onstructive possession exists when the totality of the circumstances indicates a sufficient nexus between the defendant and the contraband. [Citations omitted.]

The prosecution presented sufficient evidence from which a rational trier of fact could find beyond a reasonable doubt that defendant had "dominion or right of control over the drug with knowledge of its presence and character." *McKinney*, 258 Mich App at 165. Defendant and Martinez were the only two individuals in Reyna's bedroom when the police entered the residence. Defendant was found hiding in the bedroom closet, and the police found syringes with methamphetamine residue between clothing on the clothing rack in the bedroom. A backpack found outside of the bedroom door, which contained defendant's wallet, also contained an open package of empty syringes, which "appeared to be similar to the ones located inside the room with

the residue." After his arrest, defendant asked the police to retrieve his backpack that contained his wallet, further demonstrating defendant's ownership of the backpack. The police also found in the bedroom a plastic tray with 13.75 grams of methamphetamine, scales with methamphetamine residue, a knife with methamphetamine residue, and a glass vial and pipe with methamphetamine residue, all indicating that defendant (and Martinez) planned to divide and use the methamphetamine. Accordingly, it can be reasonably inferred that defendant had the right to exercise control of the methamphetamine and knew of its presence. See *Hardiman*, 466 Mich at 428; *Carines*, 460 Mich at 757; *Wolfe*, 440 Mich at 520.

Further, defendant's decision to hide in Reyna's bedroom closet when the police entered the residence, as well as the scale found in the closet, another scale found under the bed, and the syringes found on the clothing rack between clothing, leads to a reasonable inference that attempts were being made to conceal the methamphetamine. See *Wolfe*, 440 Mich at 522; see also *Hardiman*, 466 Mich at 428; *Carines*, 460 Mich at 757.

In addition, there was substantial evidence presented that defendant visited the residence previously to use drugs with Reyna in her bedroom. Defendant had known Reyna and her family for approximately 15 years and was "banned" from the residence in 2024 because of Butler's concern that defendant and Reyna were using drugs in Reyna's bedroom. Haskins testified that defendant visited Reyna at the residence at least six times the month before the incident. Haskins also testified that when she saw that the security cameras had been adjusted to face the ceiling, her first assumption was that defendant was at the residence. When the police arrived at the residence, Butler immediately directed them to Reyna's room and stated that defendant was in there, even though she had not yet personally seen defendant. Defendant admitted to the police that he was a drug user and that he used drugs at least six hours before his arrest.

It can be reasonably inferred from the evidence that defendant knew that the methamphetamine was present and that he had the right to exercise control over it. See *Wolfe*, 440 Mich at 524. See also *Hardiman*, 466 Mich at 428; *Carines*, 460 Mich at 757. The evidence presented at trial of defendant's connection with the methamphetamine, with Reyna, and defendant's behavior upon police entry, all indicate a sufficient nexus between defendant and the methamphetamine. Accordingly, viewing the evidence in the light most favorable to the prosecution and drawing all reasonable inferences in favor of the verdict, a rational trier of fact could have found beyond a reasonable doubt that defendant constructively possessed the methamphetamine.

Affirmed.

/s/ Michael J. Kelly
/s/ Colleen A. O'Brien
/s/ Andrew J. Lievense