[Cite as *State v. Coleman*, 2026-Ohio-4457.]

IN THE OHIO COURT OF APPEALS
FIFTH APPELLATE DISTRICT
LICKING COUNTY, OHIO

STATE OF OHIO Plaintiff - Appellee -vs- STANLEY COLEMAN Defendant - Appellant	Case No. 2026 CA 00029 Opinion and Judgment Entry Appeal from the Licking County Municipal Court, Case No. 26 CRB 00006 Judgment: Affirmed Date of Judgment Entry: November 6, 2026

BEFORE: William B. Hoffman; Robert G. Montgomery; David M. Gormley, Judges

APPEARANCES: Bobbie Yeager, Assistant Law Director, City of Newark, for Plaintiff-Appellee; Todd W. Barstow, for Defendant-Appellant.

Hoffman, P.J.

{¶1} Defendant-Appellant Stanley Coleman appeals the March 9, 2026 Sentencing Entry entered in the Licking County Municipal Court following a plea of guilty to one count of assault. Plaintiff-Appellee is the State of Ohio.

STATEMENT OF THE CASE AND FACTS

{¶2} On January 4, 2026, Appellant Stanley Coleman was charged with one count of Domestic Violence, a misdemeanor of the first degree. The victim was Appellant's mother, B.C., a family or household member.

{¶3} On March 9, 2026, Appellant appeared with counsel at a change of plea hearing. The State moved to amend the Complaint to reflect a charge of assault, a

misdemeanor of the first degree. The trial court accepted the amendment and Appellant entered a plea of guilty to that charge.

{¶4} The trial court proceeded directly to sentencing. The trial court imposed a local jail term of 180 days, with 35 days of confinement credit, imposed court costs and a fine of $100. The trial court suspended the balance of the jail term for a one-year period of probation, with terms. (Judgment Entry 03/09/2026).

{¶5} On March 25, 2026, Appellant filed a Motion to Withdraw his Guilty Plea.

{¶6} By Judgment Entry filed March 27, 2026, the trial court denied the motion to withdraw his plea.

{¶7} On April 3, 2026, Appellant filed another Motion to Withdraw his Guilty Plea.

{¶8} By Judgment Entry filed April 7, 2026, the trial court denied the motion to withdraw.

{¶9} Appellant now appeals the March 9, 2026 Sentencing Entry, assigning the following error for review:

ASSIGNMENT OF ERROR

> APPELLANT DID NOT KNOWINGLY, INTELLIGENTLY AND VOLUNTARILY ENTER HIS PLEA OF GUILTY, IN VIOLATION OF HIS RIGHT TO DUE PROCESS OF LAW UNDER THE FIFTH AND FOURTEENTH AMENDMENTS TO THE UNITED STATES CONSTITUTION AND ARTICLE ONE SECTION SIXTEEN OF THE OHIO CONSTITUTION.

I.

{¶10} Appellant argues the trial court failed to inquire if he understood the effect of his plea. We disagree.

{¶11} For misdemeanor crimes, a defendant's plea colloquy must comport with Criminal Rule 11(E) to be considered knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily entered. *State v. Engler,* 2026-Ohio-1962 (5th Dist.). Criminal Rule 11 ensures this by requiring trial judges to apprise each criminal defendant about his or her rights before any defendant surrenders those rights during the plea-change process. Trial courts should strive for "exact compliance" with Criminal Rule 11 to ensure guilty and no-contest pleas are entered in the way the law intends. *State v. Fontanez*, 2026-Ohio-3281, ¶ 23. Deviations from that standard, however, do "not always render a plea *not* knowing, intelligent, and voluntary." *Id.* (emphasis in original).

{¶12} In *Fontanez*, supra, the Court explained "[g]iven the commonly understood meaning of the term 'guilty,' a court may presume that a defendant understands that a guilty plea is a complete admission of guilt when the defendant has decided to plead guilty after being presented with the charges." *Fontanez* at ¶ 41. The Court held a trial court does not completely fail to comply with Crim.R. 11(C)(2) so as to render a guilty plea invalid when it fails to explicitly state a guilty plea constitutes a complete admission of guilt as long as the trial court otherwise complies with the requirements of Crim.R. 11(C)(2), the defendant's admission of guilt is obvious from the context of the plea colloquy, and the defendant does not assert actual innocence. *Fontanez* at ¶ 47.

{¶13} A criminal defendant who seeks the reversal of his or her conviction must usually establish an error occurred in the trial-court proceedings and he or she "was prejudiced by that error." *State v. Dangler*, 2020-Ohio-2765, ¶ 13. When we look for prejudice, we ask

"whether the plea would have otherwise been made." *State v. Gowdy*, 2025-Ohio 5575, ¶ 20. If the plea would have gone forward despite the alleged error, no prejudice has been shown.

{¶14} Two exceptions alleviate a defendant's obligation to show prejudice. The first of those arises when a trial court fails to explain the constitutional rights a defendant waives by pleading guilty or no-contest in a felony case. *State v. Clark*, 2008-Ohio-3748, ¶ 31. When that has occurred, we presume the defendant entered the plea involuntarily and unknowingly and we do not require the defendant to show prejudice. *Id.* This exception is not applicable in the instant case because Appellant pled to and was convicted of a misdemeanor.

{¶15} The second exception comes into play when the trial court "complete[ly] fail[s]" in its duty to address the nonconstitutional-rights in Criminal Rule 11(C). *Dangler* at ¶ 15.

{¶16} In general, then, our analysis of any alleged plea-colloquy missteps focuses on three questions: "(1) has the trial court complied with the relevant provision of the rule? (2) if the court has not complied fully with the rule, is the purported failure of a type that excuses a defendant from the burden of demonstrating prejudice? and (3) if a showing of prejudice is required, has the defendant met that burden?" Id. at ¶ 17.

{¶17} Here, Appellant argues the "trial court completely failed to comply with the relevant portions of Rule 11" by "completely fail[ing] to explain the effect of Appellant's plea." (Appellant's brief at 3).

{¶18} At the plea hearing, Appellant completed a "Change of Plea from Not Guilty to Guilty with an Attorney" form which began with "I understand all of the following[.]" The first paragraph beneath begins with the statement "[t]hat my plea of guilty is a complete admission of my guilt[.]" The following paragraphs listed the offense charged, maximum penalties, and Appellant's rights. The form contained several boxes to be initialed by a

defendant when changing his plea, indicating he read and understands each statement in that paragraph.

{¶19} The trial court engaged in the following colloquy with Appellant at the hearing, addressing the plea form and its contents, and inquiring whether Appellant reviewed, understood, and executed the form:

> The Court: * * * there has been a change of plea form from not guilty to guilty that has been completed and again it has been signed by you and it has been witnessed by your counsel, Mr. Meranda, and your initials appear in each of the six boxes immediately adjacent to all matters pertaining to your plea here this morning. Do you understand all of the rights that you are waiving by entering a plea of guilty to the charge of assault?
>
> Appellant: Yes.
>
> Atty. Meranda: You have to speak up it's being recorded.
>
> Appellant: Yes.
>
> The Court: Is that what you wish to do this morning sir?
>
> Appellant: Yes.
>
> The Court: Mr. Meranda, have you advised your client as to the consequences of entering a guilty plea?
>
> Atty. Meranda: Yes, your honor.
>
> The Court: The Court will accept your plea of guilty as being knowingly, voluntarily, and intelligently entered.

{¶20} (T. at 3-4).

{¶21} The trial court specifically referenced Appellant's acknowledgment by initialing the box immediately next to the paragraph [I understand] "that my guilty plea is a complete admission of guilt." (T. at 3). The trial court further informed Appellant of the effect of his written plea and engaged in a colloquy referencing the contents of the form, Appellant's rights waivers, and the effect of his guilty plea. (T. at 3-4). Appellant repeatedly indicated he read and understood all the information in the form. (T. at 3-4). The Appellant did not assert his actual innocence.

{¶22} Based on the foregoing, we find Appellant reviewed and signed the change of plea form and initialed the boxes next to each paragraph asserting he reviewed and understood his plea of guilty was a complete admission of guilt. (Judgment Entry 03/09/2026). We find the trial court sufficiently complied with the requirements of Criminal Rule 11 and Appellant's plea was entered knowingly, intelligently, and voluntarily.

{¶23} Appellant's Assignment of Error is overruled.

{¶24} The judgment of the Licking County Municipal Court is affirmed.

{¶25} Costs to Appellant.

By: Hoffman, P.J.

Montgomery, J. and

Gormley, J. concur.