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NO. CAAP-25-0000677

IN THE INTERMEDIATE COURT OF APPEALS

OF THE STATE OF HAWAIʻI

HYE JA CHOI, Plaintiff-Appellant, v.
KOREAN CHRISTIAN CHURCH; REX KIM, Defendants-Appellees

APPEAL FROM THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE FIRST CIRCUIT
HONOLULU DIVISION
(CASE NO. 1DRC-24-0010889)

SUMMARY DISPOSITION ORDER
(By: Hiraoka, Presiding Judge, Wadsworth and McCullen, JJ.)

Hye Ja **Choi**, representing herself, appeals from the September 15, 2025 ***Order:*** *(1) Granting Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment (Dkt. 55); and (2) Denying Plaintiff's Amended Motion for Summary Judgment [Dkt. 66]* entered by the District Court of the First Circuit, Honolulu Division.[1] We affirm.

Choi sued Korean Christian **Church** and Rex **Kim** for "tort losses" and a "declaratory judgment." The Church and Kim moved for summary judgment. Choi filed an amended motion for summary judgment. The motions were heard on August 25, 2025. The district court granted Church and Kim's motion and denied Choi's motion. This appeal followed.[2]

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[1] The Honorable Alvin K. Nishimura presided.

[2] A district court order is appealable if it "ends the litigation by fully deciding the rights and liabilities of all parties and leaves nothing further to be adjudicated." Casumpang v. ILWU, Local 142, 91 Hawaiʻi 425, 427, 984 P.2d 1251, 1253 (1999).

We review a grant of summary judgment *de novo*. Llanes v. Bank of Am., 154 Hawaiʻi 423, 428, 555 P.3d 110, 115 (2024).

Church and Kim challenged the district court's jurisdiction. During the hearing on the cross-motions the court orally granted Church and Kim's motion "based upon the arguments put forth regarding exclusive jurisdiction," and orally denied Choi's motion. The Order concluded "that the First Circuit Court of the State of Hawaiʻi has exclusive jurisdiction over this cause and controversy through the case entitled, Hyeja [sic] Choi vs. Korean Christian Church, et al., Civil No. 1CVV-22-0001662 [sic] (LWC), which remains pending and in which no final judgment or appealable order has been entered."

"The existence of jurisdiction is a question of law that we review de novo under the right/wrong standard." Ass'n of Apartment Owners of Century Ctr., Inc. v. An, 139 Hawaiʻi 278, 284, 389 P.3d 115, 121 (2016). The district court had jurisdiction over Choi's lawsuit under Hawaii Revised Statutes § 604-5 (2016). However, when Church and Kim moved to dismiss, another lawsuit by Choi against Church, Kim, and others was pending in circuit court. Choi v. Korean Christian Church, Civ. No. 1CCV-22-0001662 (Haw. Cir. Ct.). Choi's circuit court complaint included factual allegations materially identical to those made in her district court complaint, and raised the same legal issues.

The doctrine of *forum non conveniens* gives a court discretion to decline to exercise jurisdiction over a case that may be more appropriately tried in another forum. UFJ Bank Ltd. v. Ieda, 109 Hawaiʻi 137, 145, 123 P.3d 1232, 1240 (2005). *Forum non conveniens* applies here. "We may affirm summary judgments on any grounds in the record, including those upon which the circuit court did not rely." Llanes, 154 Hawaiʻi at 429, 555 P.3d at 116. Summary judgment for Church and Kim was appropriate, although for reasons different than those articulated by the district court.

The September 15, 2025 *Order: (1) Granting Defendants' Motion for Summary Judgment (Dkt. 55); and (2) Denying*

Plaintiff's Amended Motion for Summary Judgment [Dkt. 66] is affirmed.

DATED: Honolulu, Hawaiʻi, November 25, 2026.

On the briefs:

Hye Ja Choi,
Self-represented
Plaintiff-Appellant.

John D. Zalewski,
Lissa H. Andrews,
for Defendants-Appellees
Korean Christian Church
and Rex Kim.

/s/ Keith K. Hiraoka
Presiding Judge

/s/ Clyde J. Wadsworth
Associate Judge

/s/ Sonja M.P. McCullen
Associate Judge