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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Response from State Attorney Monique Worrell

ORANGE COUNTY, FL (August 6, 2026) — Our hearts are with the families of the two young men whose lives were tragically taken. Their loved ones deserve answers, and our community deserves a juvenile justice system that works to prevent these senseless acts of violence before they occur instead of partisan political rhetoric and misinformation.

It is disappointing, but not surprising, that the appointed Attorney General continues to make politically motivated statements without knowing all the facts. Public safety deserves thoughtful leadership and not rhetoric designed to score political points.

The most recent case referenced by Volusia Sheriff Mike Chitwood that involves this juvenile did not occur within the Ninth Judicial Circuit, but rather his own Seventh Circuit and is therefore outside the jurisdiction of this office to speak to.

Because juvenile proceedings are confidential under Florida law, the State Attorney's Office is limited in what it can publicly discuss regarding individual juvenile cases. However, since our circuit's name has been invoked in an effort to inject election year politics into a tragedy, it is important to clarify several points.

- Prosecutors do not determine sentencing outcomes in juvenile cases. Dispositions are ultimately determined by the Court, with recommendations and involvement from the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.
- As State Attorney, I have consistently advocated for a more effective, data-driven juvenile justice system that identifies high-risk youth early and provides meaningful interventions to reduce violence. As part of that effort, I have repeatedly sought collaboration with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice to discuss opportunities to strengthen coordination, identify gaps in intervention, and improve outcomes for young people before they commit more serious offenses. Despite those repeated outreach efforts, the Department has not responded. In fact, most recently, they've outright declined to participate in these conversations.
- Prosecutors make charging decisions based on the evidence legally available to them. When a case cannot be prosecuted, that may be the result of evidentiary limitations, including circumstances in which necessary victims or witnesses are unable or unwilling to participate. The State Attorney's Office cannot ethically or lawfully pursue charges when the available evidence is insufficient to support prosecution. We cannot manufacture outcomes to fit a political agenda.

Accountability matters, but so does intervention before a child's behavior escalates to the point that lives are lost. This tragedy involves an individual whose interactions with the criminal justice system began at just 12-years-old. That fact underscores why early intervention matters and why the entire system must be reformed.

Protecting our communities requires every part of the juvenile justice system to work together. My office remains committed to that work and putting partisan politics aside to protect residents.

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Seek Justice. Love Mercy. Walk Humbly.

The Office of the State Attorney for the Ninth Judicial Circuit is represented by The Honorable Monique H. Worrell and serves Orange and Osceola counties in Central Florida. A culturally diverse community, the area is home to over 1.9 million residents and is a vacation destination for millions each year. Our office is committed to making Orlando and the surrounding area a vibrant and safe place to live, work and play.

For general media inquiries, please contact: PIO@sao9.org.

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