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PRESS RELEASE

Youth Pastor Charged with Murder for Hire Plot in Somerset County

On February 24, 2020, Pennsylvania State Police charged former youth pastor, Jacob Malone, with multiple counts of Solicitation to Commit Murder, and related charges, for attempting to hire someone to kill Pastor Harold Lee Wiggins and Common Pleas Judge Jacqueline Cody in Somerset County. The defendant, age 37, served as a pastor at Calvary Fellowship in Downingtown, P.A., from 2014-2015.

The defendant had been serving a state prison sentence of 3-6 years at SCI Laurel Highlands in Somerset County for sexually assaulting a teenage girl in Chester County. He allegedly offered a fellow inmate \$5,000 to kill the head pastor at the church because of his involvement with Malone's case. The defendant also told the inmate that he would be willing to offer additional money for the murder of Judge Cody, who presided over the sexual assault case.

This inmate contacted the Chester County District Attorney's Office in July 2019, regarding this accusation. Chester County Detectives conducted an immediate investigation, including interviewing the inmate that defendant had solicited to commit murder. After concluding that Chester County had no jurisdiction over this matter which occurred in Somerset County, PA, our assigned

detective promptly referred it to the Pennsylvania State Police in Somerset on August 12, 2019.

District Attorney Deb Ryan stated, “The District Attorney’s Office is deeply concerned about these extremely serious allegations. Most importantly, we can confirm that the victims involved in this case are safe. We are committed to assisting the Pennsylvania State Police and the Somerset County District Attorney’s Office in their investigation.”

The allegations from the criminal complaint¹ are as follows:

On February 18, 2020, Pennsylvania State Trooper Patrick Hauser contacted an inmate inside SCI Laurel Highlands. He reported that the defendant told him he “wanted to get revenge on the people involved in his case.” The inmate told the defendant to “put it behind him.”

Trooper Hauser then contacted Chester County Detective John O’Donnell on February 20, 2020, regarding this incident. O’Donnell reported that he met with another inmate after he received letters from him about an alleged murder for hire plot. The inmate told the detective that the defendant had attempted to arrange for the murder of Wiggins and Cody while they were both incarcerated at SCI Laurel Highlands. Trooper Hauser reviewed the letters sent by the inmate and initiated the criminal complaint.

The defendant was arrested on February 26, 2020, and is currently incarcerated awaiting a preliminary hearing before Magisterial District Judge Kenneth Johnson in Somerset.

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Approved for release:

Deborah Ryan
District Attorney

¹ A criminal defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty in court.