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NEWS RELEASE
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**STATE ATTORNEY WORRELL'S STATEMENT ON THE
WITHDRAWAL OF DEATH NOTICES**

ORLANDO, FL – The Office of the State Attorney received a phone call at 8:30 a.m. this morning inviting us to an 11 a.m. press conference on former State Attorney Aramis Ayala's decision to withdraw death notices in three cases. Whether to seek the death penalty is one of the most serious and difficult issues within the criminal justice system. I have promised to treat decisions on whether to seek it with extreme care, and I am currently in the process of forming a panel and developing a procedure to review every capital-eligible case that comes before my panel.

Under my administration we will treat each victims' family with the utmost respect, understanding the enormous and unbearable trauma that will live with them forever. We will review each individual case with detail and caution, and only make decisions and comments on them after completing that process. It is premature and inappropriate to engage in public discussion concerning these cases without having had an opportunity to meet with the families and explore our legal options in this matter. To do so would disrespect the victims impacted by this decision. I have spoken with the family of Janice Zengotita Torres, and we have agreed to meet in the near future.

I have also spoken with the Sheriff of Osceola County, and it is my hope that we can build a future where the community can look to us for a more collaborative process between our agencies involving matters such as this. Please note that I stand by our intention to approach these sensitive matters thoughtfully through meaningful and measured conversations with the families and law enforcement agencies. We will continue to work actively with law enforcement and will continue to have discussions internally to evaluate how we can move forward in the handling of these cases within the confines of the law. The most important thing we want to communicate is that our focus will always be the safety of our community and the citizens of the Ninth Judicial Circuit of Orange and Osceola Counties. When I ran for State Attorney, I made a promise to do more for the people harmed by serious crime, and that includes providing access to services to help them address the considerable trauma they have experienced. We intend to keep that promise and hope the Sheriff will work with us on providing meaningful support.

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

For media records request, please contact: mediarecordsrequest@sao9.org.

For specific media inquiries pertaining to State Attorney Monique Worrell, please contact Keisha Mulfort at kmulfort@sao9.org.