

United States Senate

February 28, 2023

The Honorable Monique H. Worrell
State Attorney, Ninth Judicial Circuit
415 North Orange Avenue
Orlando, FL 32801

Dear State Attorney Worrell:

Last week, the Orlando community, along with Floridians and Americans across our state and nation were shocked by reports of the heinous murders of three innocent people in Pine Hills, Florida. This week, a classroom at Pine Hills Elementary School will be without the bright smile of nine-year-old T'yonna Major. Televisions in homes across Central Florida, and the newsroom at Spectrum News 13, will miss the dedicated reporting and kindness of 24-year-old Dylan Lyons. In Pine Hills, friends and loved ones mourn the loss of 38-year-old Nathacha Augustin and pray for the recovery of two others injured in this attack.

All three of these young Floridians were senselessly gunned down by a vicious criminal who never should have been on our streets. Now, we must have justice and full accountability. If convicted, nothing short of the death penalty should be sought as punishment for this vile murderer.

In too many cities across America, we have seen soft-on-crime policies sold to the public on the lies that lighter punishment, even in the face of repeated offenses, does more good than swift accountability. It is a failed philosophy pushed by the radical left that, like the dangerous defund the police movement, is spreading like cancer through criminal justice systems in liberal areas of our country and taking countless innocent lives along the way.

Let me be clear: we will not tolerate the disastrous consequences of woke, soft-on-crime agendas in Florida. There is no reason or logic behind these philosophies, only leftist politics that continue to overpromise and underdeliver. I understand why you'd like to make this about our political differences; but for me and so many Floridians in the Ninth Circuit and across our state, this is about one thing: maintaining law and order. As I made clear in my statement last week, any member of the criminal justice system that doesn't share a commitment to that principle shouldn't keep their job.

As the State Attorney responsible for prosecuting crimes in Orange and Osceola Counties, I expect that you will take seriously the task before you. That is what the voters in the Ninth Circuit elected you to do. I write to you today with questions on your office's past and current policies, and to urge the strongest possible penalties under law to hold the alleged killer accountable for these horrific crimes:

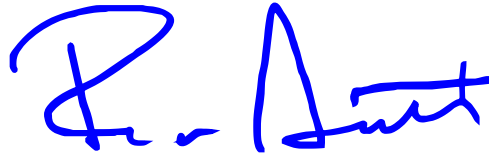
1. Does your office have a process, whether formal or informal, to evaluate whether a qualifying offense committed by a juvenile should be tried in adult court? If so, please describe that process.
2. Does your office have a policy, whether formal or informal, to decline to direct-file an information to pursue a criminal prosecution with adult sanctions for a qualifying offense committed by a juvenile pursuant to your authority under Section 985.557, Florida Statutes?
 - a. Since taking office as State Attorney:
 - i. How many cases has your office prosecuted in juvenile court involving one or more qualifying offenses listed in Section 985.557(1)(a), Florida Statutes?
 - ii. How many times has your office direct-filed an information to pursue adult sanctions pursuant to that statutory authority?
3. Does your office have a policy, whether formal or informal, to decline to file a motion seeking the transfer of a minor offender for criminal prosecution in adult court pursuant to your authority under Section 985.556, Florida Statutes?
 - a. Since taking office as State Attorney:
 - i. How many times has your office filed a motion requesting a juvenile court to transfer a qualified minor for criminal prosecution in adult court pursuant to that statutory authority?
 - ii. How many times has a juvenile court granted such a motion to transfer a minor for criminal prosecution in adult court?

I look forward to your prompt response to these questions and remain committed to doing everything in my power to ensure the monster responsible for taking the lives of these innocent Floridians is brought to justice.

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I sincerely hope that you will use your office to deliver that justice and show this community, our state and the nation that Florida will offer no mercy to those who seek to destroy life and terrorize our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott
United States Senator