



## MECKLENBURG COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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### MEDIA ALERT FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office Extends Apology to Victim's Family

**(CHARLOTTE, NC)** – The Mecklenburg County Sheriff's Office (MCSO) extends its deepest sympathy to the Zellars family. We recognize the profound grief you continue to carry after the tragic loss of your son, and we are truly sorry for the additional pain caused by seeing the accused in recent media coverage promoting a detention center program.

MCSO does not typically notify families when residents are involved in media coverage. However, in this case we acknowledge that given the circumstances, this should have warranted greater sensitivity. While outreach is not standard procedure, we sincerely apologize for failing to understand how this would affect the Zellars.

All programs in the detention center are voluntary. We understand there may be concerns when families see someone accused of a serious crime participating in a rehabilitative program. However, we help all residents with healing and rehabilitation. The purpose of our programs is not to determine guilt or innocence, but to offer support and structure for those willing to engage in change.

The program in question is part of a broader initiative to provide voluntary, rehabilitative opportunities to residents in our care. As mentioned, these programs are not based on the nature of an individual's charges, but rather on their conduct while in custody and their willingness to reflect on the circumstances that brought them to the detention center, confront addictions, address mental health challenges, and work towards becoming better citizens.

Sheriff McFadden has spent over four decades standing with victims of violent crime, both as a homicide detective and now as Sheriff. Supporting victims and advocating for justice are core values of this office. At the same time, we believe that justice includes both accountability and the opportunity for individuals to change—so fewer families suffer an unimaginable loss.

To the Zellars family: your voice matters. Your loss matters. We are committed to learning from this and doing better moving forward. You have our continued respect, our sympathy, and our sincere apologies.

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