



The Office of
Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison
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April 6, 2023

The Honorable Timothy Walz
130 State Capitol
75 Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Blvd.
St. Paul, MN 55155

Re: Murder of Zaria McKeever

Dear Governor Walz:

As you know, Zaria McKeever was brutally murdered in her home on November 8, 2022. According to court filings and other facts publicly reported, Zaria's jealous ex-boyfriend Erick Haynes and two juveniles identified as JSK and FKK went to Zaria's house to kill her new boyfriend. JSK, age 17, and FKK, age 15, kicked in the door and instead of targeting the boyfriend, FKK fired five shots at Ms. McKeever execution-style, killing her immediately.

Not surprisingly, the murder has devastated Zaria's family and shocked the community. What is surprising is the decision by the Hennepin County Attorney to retain JSK and FKK in the juvenile system rather than seek certification to adult court. Following the murder, the former Hennepin County Attorney moved to certify both to adult court. But last month, the newly-elected county attorney abruptly changed course and offered plea agreements to retain them both in the juvenile system.

Zaria McKeever's family is adamantly opposed to this disposition, as is the community at large. The police organizations have strongly and publicly opposed the deals, which is extremely rare. Due to the strong opposition to these deals, I offered to the Hennepin County Attorney to take over the prosecution. That offer was refused.

The disposition offered by the county attorney is inappropriate, so far outside the normal course for the prosecution of such a heinous crime, and so far outside of community expectations. Minnesota law provides that in cases of potential adult certification, the court should decide whether certification is appropriate based on consideration of several factors, with greater weight given to the seriousness of the alleged offense in terms of community protection, including any aggravating factors, the use of a firearm and the impact on the victim. In this case, the county attorney offered a deal that takes that decision out of the judge's hands and ignores the most important factors that weigh heavily for adult certification. It is my understanding that JSK has

already entered a guilty plea and it is probably too late to change that. But FKK has a plea hearing scheduled for tomorrow morning.

Given the extraordinary nature of this case, I ask that you exercise your authority under Minnesota Statutes section 8.01 to assign this case to my office for the prosecution of any persons responsible in the murder of Zaria McKeever. I do not make this request lightly and I do not expect to have to make a request like this again. I am mindful that county attorneys are elected by their constituents to make difficult decisions. But the decision by the county attorney in this case is wrong and will have long-lasting consequences for the integrity of the criminal justice system.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Keith Ellison". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a stylized "K" and "E".

KEITH ELLISON
Attorney General