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PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

District Attorney Tony Jordan announced today that Joshua Bennett pled guilty to Criminally Negligent Homicide and Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance that along with his previous guilty plea to Criminal Sale of a Controlled Substance will result in a prison sentence of 12-14 years with sentencing scheduled for February 26, 2016. This plea follows months of extensive investigation into the circumstances surrounding the death of Kaleigh Mae Cassell led by Washington County Sheriff's Department Sr. Investigator Anthony Leclaire. Investigator Leclaire coordinated a comprehensive investigation, including assistance from the New York State Police BCI Investigators, the Forensic Investigation Unit and the New York State Police Crime Lab.

Ultimately the evidence developed in this case, which included hundreds of items seized and analyzed pursuant to four (4) search warrants issued, including over 100 items analyzed for DNA and fingerprint evidence, supported the plea agreement reached today.

Despite exhaustive investigative efforts by all involved, there was no direct evidence establishing who gave Kayliegh Cassell the heroin and /or cocaine, or how it was delivered. The investigation did eliminate possible other responsible adults, leaving Rachel Ball and Joshua Bennett as the only two constants in Kayliegh's life.

As established in the Court of Appeals case of People v. Wong, in these types of cases it is not enough to say simply that one of them had to have committed the act and the other knew but did nothing. Our Constitution will not permit that result. The People must prove who acted beyond a reasonable doubt and that the other person knew and failed to act beyond a reasonable doubt. In a circumstantial case like this, the People must also establish that no other innocent hypothesis exists to a moral certainty. Ultimately the developments of the last several days with a previously unidentified witness coming forward raised significant reasonable doubt regarding the top charges and resulted in this resolution.

Sheriff Jeff Murphy and I would like to thank the New York State Police for their assistance holding Defendant Joshua Bennett and Rachel Ball accountable and assisting in moving forward in the trial against Defendant Joshua Bennett next month.