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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Chief Public Defender Responds to Guilty Plea of Andrew Delke**

**NASHVILLE, Tenn. (July 2, 2021)**

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Today's decision is a painful example of what "justice" looks like in a two-tiered criminal legal system.

In Nashville in 2020, more than half of all people arrested were Black despite making up only about 28% of the population.

In Nashville in 2020, almost 60% of the jail population was Black.

In every category of cases, bail amounts for Black people were set higher than those of Caucasian people charged with the same offenses.

These statistics highlight bias in the criminal legal system and serve as the basis for the outcry for change in Nashville. Public defenders know firsthand the disparities that exist and are proximate to the pain our clients and their families feel during their encounters with the system. We witness daily how the criminal legal system tramples on Black people, other minority communities, and the poor.

Our clients -particularly those who are Black- face harsher sentences, more time incarcerated, perpetual separation from their families, and the inability to re-enter a community that has cast them aside and put barriers in place that continue to dehumanize them upon their release from custody.

As the Chief Public Defender, I will continue to advocate to eradicate this dual legal system, and I will fight until all who stand accused are given the same empathy, consideration, and opportunity for a second chance despite their race and economic status.

I understand the outrage felt by Ms. Hambrick and the Hambrick family. I stand in solidarity with members of the Nashville community as we fight to transform this legal system that is rooted in racism, privilege and wealth.

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Martasha L. Johnson, Public Defender