



Lebanon Man Sentenced to Life in Prison for Aggravated Murder

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Warren County Prosecutor David P. Fornshell announced that Elijah Malik Thomas, 28, of Lebanon, Ohio, was sentenced to life in prison for the 2023 killing of Katelyn Puckett, 23, at her residence in Franklin. Judge Donald E. Oda II sentenced Thomas for the charges of aggravated murder with a firearm specification and improperly discharging a firearm at or into a habitation with a firearm specification. Judge Oda remarked that Thomas planned the murder and showed little remorse for his actions. Thomas' first opportunity for parole will be in 40 to 42 years.

On June 17, 2023, Thomas approached Puckett as she returned to her apartment and fired nine shots at close range in front of eyewitnesses. Six of the shots struck Puckett. Thomas then fled the area. City of Franklin police officers and emergency medical services responded and attempted life saving measures. The Montgomery County Coroner's Office determined Puckett's cause of death to be multiple gunshot wounds.

Detectives from the City of Franklin Police Department responded to begin their investigation. Officers recovered nine shell casings and multiple bullet fragments at the scene. A neighbor's RING camera recorded audio of the shooting. Family members shared with law enforcement multiple violent threats by Thomas in the days and weeks preceding the shooting. GPS location data showed that Thomas had been lying in wait for more than 30 minutes before Puckett and her companions returned home.

On November 5th, Judge Donald E. Oda II found Thomas guilty following a 2-day trial to the court.

Fornshell commended Franklin Police Department Detective Amanda Myers, Warren County Prosecutor's Office Assistant Prosecuting Attorneys Travis J. Vieux and Gray Chester, Director of Victim and Witness Services Erika Bourelle and Deputy Office Administrator Sidney Logsdon for their work on the case.



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