



Law Office of the Public Defender

Seventeenth Judicial Circuit

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October 26, 2022

Chief Chris O'Brien

Hollywood Police Department

3250 Hollywood Boulevard

Hollywood, Florida 33021

Sheriff Gregory Tony

Broward Sheriff's Office

2601 West Broward Boulevard

Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312

Re: K.B. - Baker Act / Suicide
BCCN: 952026

Dear Chief O'Brien and Sheriff Tony:

It is with great sadness that I again write you to address an inmate death in the jail that seems otherwise preventable. Keirstyn Bucy, was severely mentally ill. On October 13, 2022, she died in the jail while on suicide watch. She would have turned 23 years old four days later, on October 17th, but she never got to see that day. This young lady had family that loved her; she was in crisis, yet she was not heard or helped.

Ms. Bucy's unfortunate death illustrates yet another failure of the mental health system in Broward County. Rather than being helped, she was criminalized. She was arrested because she was sick, and she ultimately died because the system designed to protect her failed.

It is incomprehensible to believe that law enforcement professionals could not distinguish between a manifestation of an acute mental health episode that took place in a mental health facility from criminal behavior. She was arrested while being treated at Memorial Regional Hospital. She was there under a Baker Act protocol that is designed to involuntarily admit a person for psychiatric care who demonstrates a threat to themselves or others. Yet, police protocol usurped those protections afforded the mentally ill because she allegedly spit on an officer while being medically sedated.

It is intellectually offensive to conclude that the appropriate response to a person clearly in need of help, should be removed from the very place that is designed and best equipped to address her needs and put her in a cold callous jail. She was in the throes of a mental health crisis; she should have remained at the Baker Act Facility. Arresting a clearly ill person who is behaving in conformity with their condition, makes no good sense. It is a clear example of over-policing that exacerbated her suffering. The poorly executed decision to remove her from a hospital setting did not end with her arrest.

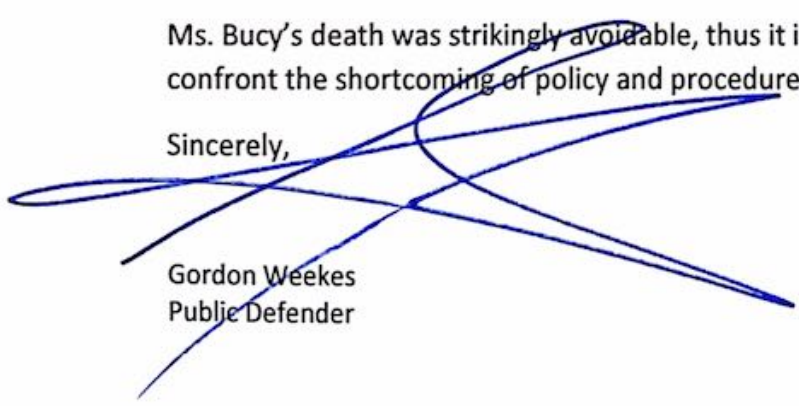
Once transported to the jail, she was placed on "suicide watch" which should have afforded her additional safeguards to protect her, such as enhanced observations from jail staff and mandated removal of items that could be used to inflict self-harm. Yet shortly thereafter, she was able to access the means to hurt herself and ultimately committed suicide in the jail.

I hereby demand that body camera footage of her arrest be preserved and released to the family immediately. The officer's actions should also be brought under review to determine the appropriateness of their decision to remove her from a forensic setting while in mental health crisis.

It is my understanding that her passing was captured on surveillance video within the jail. As I have in the past, I am asking that all video footage of this incident be preserved and immediately made available to the family. I further demand that you review your policies pertaining to a detention deputy's responsibility when monitoring a suicidal inmate and your protocol for restricting access to bedding and the like, while under suicide watch. You must hold those officers and deputies. It seems that both processes failed Ms. Bucy, and we must ensure that it does not reoccur.

Ms. Bucy's death was strikingly avoidable, thus it is incumbent upon system leaders to confront the shortcoming of policy and procedure to ensure that future lives are saved.

Sincerely,



Gordon Weekes
Public Defender

Cc: Harold Pryor, State Attorney