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ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Funeral Home Employee Charged with Financial Exploitation of 84-Year-Old Man

Miami (March 9, 2022) - State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Miami-Dade Police Department Interim Director George A. Perez announce that the State Attorney's Office Elderly Exploitation Task Force and the Miami-Dade Police Department have taken into custody 56-year-old Maribel Torres, charging her in the alleged exploitation of an 84-year-old man.

In August of 2019, Torres, an employee of Maspons Funeral Home, met the victim while funeral arrangements were being made for the victim's wife. The wife, who had passed away the day before, had been the primary caregiver for the victim. The victim had been diagnosed the previous year with Alzheimer's Disease and advanced dementia. The victim's nephew, who lived in Palm Beach County, visited the victim and discovered Torres and her adult son living with the victim at the victim's residence. When the victim identified Torres and her son as the nephew's aunt and cousin from Cuba, the nephew notified the authorities. Torres and her son are not related to the victim and his family.

"Utilizing a wife's death and an obvious impairment as tools to steal an elderly man's home would seem to be a new low in alleged criminal conduct," noted State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "Situations like this expose the ugly face of elderly exploitation which targets the frailest members of our community. I commend the Miami-Dade detectives, my prosecutors, and the staff of my Elderly Exploitation Unit for their commitment to ending such despicable crimes."

Torres is also charged with:

- 1 count - Exploitation of the Elderly or Disabled Over \$100,000 - 1st Degree Felony
- 1 count - Grand Theft 1st Degree Over \$100,00 - 1st Degree Felony
- 1 count - Organized Scheme to Defraud - 3rd Degree Felony

While arranging the funeral, Torres befriended the victim and then allegedly "discovered" that they were family members, creating with him a perceived sense of trust. This supposed "newly discovered family relationship" allowed Torres to obtain from the victim his financial paperwork as well as information regarding the status of his mortgage-free home of 40 years. Within a few months, Torres and her son allegedly had the victim sign a number of legal documents and quit-claim deeds through which Torres and her son added themselves as owners of the victim's home. Torres additionally allegedly manipulated the victim into signing a power of attorney, providing her with full access to the victim's legal and financial affairs.

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In November 2020, Torres obtained another quit claim deed from the victim, changing the property ownership from Torres, her son, and the victim, to a corporate entity Torres created named 5811 SW 25 St LLC, listed as a car wash business. A balloon mortgage was subsequently taken out on the victim's property in the amount of \$100,000.00 with the mortgage funds flowing to a bank account having Torres and her son as the only authorized signers.

In March 2021, Torres' corporation, 5811 SW 25 St LLC, obtained a business loan utilizing the home it now owned as collateral in the amount of \$360,000.00. The business loan funds were deposited into a bank account under the corporation 5811 SW 25 St LLC, with Torres listed as the account's only authorized signer.

Between March 23, 2021 and April 8, 2021, six large cash withdrawals were made totaling \$118,000.00 from the account with \$104,627 being deposited in a 5811 SW 25 St LLC corporate savings account with Torres as an authorized signer. A review of the financial records also revealed a notarized letter submitted to the bank and allegedly signed by Torres and the victim indicating that the victim was not to have access to the account and/or any account, whether checking or savings, at the institution.

“Our community will not stand for crimes in which our elderly are exploited,” stated Miami-Dade Police Department Interim Director George A. Perez. “I am very proud of our Organized Crime Bureau, Economic and Specialized Investigation Section detectives, who in collaboration with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office, Elderly Exploitation Task Force, investigated and arrested the person responsible for this heinous crime. We will continue to work together to protect our community and bring justice to our most vulnerable.”

For media interviews with State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, please call 305-547-0535 to check her afternoon availability.

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