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ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Alleged Selling of Fake Handicapped Parking Documents Leads to Woman's Arrest

Miami (September 15, 2022) - State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Miami Beach Police Department Chief Richard Clements, and Miami-Dade Police Department Director Alfredo "Freddy" Ramirez III, announce the arrest of 26-year-old Nicole Cardona.

Cardona is alleged to have been selling applications for permanent disabled parking permits, complete with forged doctor signatures, which allowed Cardona's customers to fraudulently obtain parking placards issued by the Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles. Miami Beach Police and Miami Beach government officials have been inundated with resident complaints reference drivers abusing disabled placards to park in permitted residential neighborhoods for unlimited lengths of time.

"While profiteering from the sale of illegal handicapped parking placards may seem like a small issue to many who live beyond Miami Beach, this enterprise which allegedly involved the forging of doctors' signatures on official documents, is a criminal act and impacts the daily lives of numerous residents living in the city," said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle.

Nicole Cardona is charged with:

- 1 Count - Organized Scheme to Defraud less than \$20,000 - 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 Count - Criminal Use of a Public Record or Public Records Information - 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 Count - Forgery - 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 Count - False Official Statements - 2nd Degree Misdemeanor

The investigation into Cardona began when a Miami Beach Detective observed a driver exiting a vehicle parked in spot reserved for the handicapped. Although the vehicle had a handicap parking permit displayed, the circumstances appeared suspicious. When questioned, the driver ultimately admitted that he had obtained the placard by way of a woman who was selling applications for placards. He learned about the source via a co-worker at his restaurant job. The cost was \$150.

This led police to perform two undercover, controlled purchases from Cardona of disabled parking permit applications. In both instances, Cardona allegedly requested a copy of the buyer's driver's license and a \$200 payment. Each fully completed application had the same handwriting style throughout the entire application, and included the printed name, medical license number and signatures of two different local doctors who denied signing those documents.

"The fraudulent use of disabled parking permits is certainly not a victimless crime. The victims are those who legitimately need the parking spaces," explained Miami Beach Police Chief Richard Clements. "Our department is cracking down on the violators and those who facilitate obtaining the placards."

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FOR FURTHER
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