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STATE ATTORNEY



ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Heart Association Instructor Charged in Alleged Certification Fraud

Miami (September 9, 2022) - State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Miami-Dade Police Department Director Alfredo “Freddy” Ramirez III announce the arrest of 60-year-old Carlos Ernesto Rojas for the alleged sale of American Heart Association (AHA) certifications without training the recipients, contrary to AHA requirements.

“Falsification of any certification always has the potential of placing people in danger. However, falsifications of training in life-saving techniques creates an obvious risk if a life-or-death situation arises, something these certifications were intended to avoid” said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. “I applaud the work of the Miami-Dade Police Department in ending this almost invisible danger and know that my prosecutors will quickly bring this case before the judges of our criminal courts.”

Rojas, a retired City of Hialeah firefighter with 20 years’ experience with the department, possessed AHA instructor certifications in Basic Life Support (BLS), Advanced Cardiovascular Life Support (ACLS) and Pediatric Advance Life Support (PALS) which allowed him to teach those classes. A broad range of professions, such as bus drivers, child-care providers, police officers, firefighters, paramedics, nurses, and physicians, require BLS certifications, with individuals working in certain specialized medical areas needing additional certifications like the ACLS and PALS.

Carlos Ernesto Rojas is charged with:

- 1 Count - Organized Scheme to Defraud - 3rd Degree Felony

The investigation of Rojas began in 2021, after 14 individuals who were offered employment or promotion by Jackson Health Systems contacted Rojas seeking BLS and/or ACLS training. These individuals allege that they paid Rojas a total of \$1,140.00 for the necessary courses. They expected to receive training, but no training occurred. Instead, these individuals allegedly received electronic records (eCards) from Rojas indicating that they participated in or successfully completed a course.

After these individuals contacted Miami-Dade Police, an undercover police operation was undertaken in which an officer allegedly obtained BLS certification without any training from Rojas for \$60, transmitted via electronic money transfer. Following the money exchange, the AHA sent an email to the undercover officer congratulating him/her for completing the AHA training and providing instructions on how to claim his eCard.

FOR FURTHER
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The AHA could not have known the identity of the undercover officer nor how to contact him without Rojas having provided the course completion information to AHA. The undercover officer did not participate in or successfully complete any cognitive and/or skill evaluations as required by the curriculum of the AHA to receive the AHA certificates. Documentation provided by the AHA showed that between January 1, 2020 and December 1, 2021, Rojas allegedly issued over 14,500 certificates on behalf of the AHA. At \$60 per card, Rojas allegedly may have taken in over \$870,000 during that time period.

The criminal investigation of this matter is on-going. If additional evidence is uncovered, further charges may be forthcoming.

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