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ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

10 Charged in Cheating Scheme to Fraudulently Obtain State Certificates of Competency in Elevator Repair

Miami (November 3, 2022) - State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle and Miami-Dade County Inspector General Felix Jimenez announce the charging of 10 individuals involved in a scheme to obtain State of Florida Certificates of Competency required for elevator mechanics working in our community without taking the required online, open-book examinations. Allegations of impropriety were brought to the attention of the Miami-Dade County Inspector General's Office and an investigation was immediately initiated in conjunction with the Miami-Dade State Attorney's Office.

"The personal safety of every individual in Miami-Dade County must always be a paramount concern. When someone tries to shortcut a public safety requirement or certification, they go out of their way to create an unnecessary risk," said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. "This alleged cheating scheme by trained technicians cannot and will not stand. I applaud the actions of the Miami-Dade County Inspector General's Office for their hard work in uncovering this scheme and working to ensure the public's safety."

It is alleged that Gabriel Alfonso and David Valles-Gomez orchestrated a test-taking operation in which, for a price, Valles-Gomez would take the online competency exam in the name of another individual, thereby acquiring for that individual a Florida Certification of Completion of the State exam. The mechanics then used the fraudulent exam document to obtain a Florida Certificate of Competency in elevator repair. Most of the mechanics had previously worked on elevators, escalators and moving sidewalks in areas where certification of the type required in Florida was not a requirement. It is alleged that Gabriel Alfonso acted as the middleman, collecting a fee ranging between \$250 to \$400, of which \$200 to \$300 would go as payment to Valles-Gomez for taking the test. Upon the discovery of this alleged scheme, all work undertaken by these individuals on Miami-Dade County property was reinspected by Florida Certified elevator mechanics.

Charged today are Gabriel Alfonso, David Valles-Gomez, Xael Concepcion-Vargas, Jose Cuevas-Romero, Ramon Fleitas, Marcos Garcia, Hugo Marte, Gabriel Ortiz, Jose Tirado-Blanco and Frederick Williams. All 10 defendants are charged with 1 count of Organized Scheme to Defraud under \$20,000. They are also charged with criminal Cheating.

Alfonso and Valles-Gomez are each charged with 8 counts of Organized Scheme to Defraud under \$20,000 due to their alleged roles in making the overall scheme work, while the remaining individuals are each charged with 1 count. Additionally, Alfonso and Valles-Gomez are charged with 8 counts of statutory Cheating for their roles in making the alleged scheme work while the remaining individuals are each charged with 1 count of Cheating. All the charges are 3rd degree felonies.

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