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**ELEVENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR MIAMI-DADE COUNTY**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Traffic Court Clerk Charged in Thefts

Miami (May 12, 2023) - State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Miami-Dade Police Department Director Alfredo Ramirez and Miami-Dade Clerk of the Courts Ad Interim Luis G. Montaldo announce the arrest of 57-year-old Scott Kessler, an 11-year Clerk of the Courts employee who had been working at the North Dade Justice Center. Kessler's official responsibilities included assisting individuals seeking to pay for traffic infractions and other court and mandated payments. Kessler also was assigned with helping individuals with establishing payment plans in their attempt to satisfy monies owed to the court.

Scott Kessler is being charged with:

- 1 count – Conspiracy to Commit Organized Scheme to Defraud – 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 count -Official Misconduct 3rd Degree Felony
- 1 count – Grand Theft – 3rd Degree Felony

“When government employees steal, they not only seize the public’s money, but they squander the public’s trust in their local government,” said State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle. “Such actions betray our community and can never be accepted or tolerated. My Public Corruption prosecutors, the Miami-Dade Police Department and Ad Interim Clerk of the Courts Luis Montaldo continue to be committed to the of elimination of any such potential activity in our court system or any other part of governmental activity.”

After 5 individuals, who had paid their total traffic fines in cash, began to receive notices of a failure to complete a payment plan, they notified the Clerk of the Courts of the discrepancy. This led the Miami-Dade Police Department to run an undercover operation utilizing video surveillance and undercover police officers paying their fines with marked bills directly to clerk Kessler. The observations of what transpired after the payments were made led to Kessler’s arrest at the North Dade Justice Center and the discovery of the marked currency on his person. At present, the alleged thefts are suspected of amounting to between \$4,000 to \$5,000.

FOR FURTHER
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“It is the responsibility of our Public Corruption Unit to investigate any criminal behavior involving a Miami-Dade County employee” stated Miami-Dade Police Department Director Alfredo Ramirez. “We value our community’s trust, and we vow to conduct a thorough investigation on all cases to ensure we do not jeopardize the community’s trust.”

“I am always saddened to hear when anyone violates their position of trust and authority” added Miami-Dade Clerk of the Courts Ad Interim Luis G. Montaldo. “That is why, when I first learned of the theft, I instructed Clerk staff to contact and cooperate with the State Attorney's Office and Miami-Dade Police Department's investigation. The public trust is crucial to the function of the Clerk's office, and anyone who erodes that trust by stealing must answer to law enforcement. I want to thank my fellow judicial partners for their thorough investigation which resulted in this arrest.”

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

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