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PRESS RELEASE

MURDER & CRUELTY CHARGES AGAINST JUSTIN ROSS HARRIS DISMISSED

Almost 9 years after the tragic death of Cooper Harris on June 18, 2014, the murder and child cruelty charges against Justin Ross Harris, Cooper's father, have been dismissed. Cobb County Superior Court Judge Robert Leonard signed an order today which terminates the prosecution of our client. Ross has always accepted the moral responsibility for Cooper's death. But after all these years of investigation and review, this dismissal of charges confirms that Cooper's death was unintentional and therefore not a crime.

We are grateful for the support of Jeanette Fennell and Amber Rollins of KidsAndCars.org and of Dr. David Diamond for their work preventing hot car deaths. Their guidance helped us understand how Cooper's death tragically fits the pattern of how children are unintentionally left in cars.

The statistics are clear — on average, 39 children die in hot cars every year in the U.S. And criminalizing unintentional deaths, like in this case, is not a deterrent to future hot car tragedies. Charging a grieving parent for an unintentional memory failure does nothing to prevent the tragedy from happening to another. In fact, child fatalities from hot cars increased after Ross' 2016 trial, the most widely reported hot car death case in history. Sadly, 2018 & 2019 were the worst 2 years in history for child hot car deaths with 54 & 53 fatalities respectively.

This nine-year experience has led us to agree with the advocates at KidsAndCars.org that charging parents like Ross further perpetuates the very common, but false, belief that only bad parents can have a memory failure resulting in a child forgotten in a car.

Indeed, throughout the course of representing Ross, we have learned that these tragic accidents often happen while the child is in the care of a loving parent. Ross was no different. He deeply loved Cooper. Ross is no doubt relieved at the dismissal of the charges against him, but he is also thankful that today's dismissal may begin to restore Cooper's legacy as a child much loved by his parents.

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