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### **Joint Press Release – February 16, 2025** **Ontario County District Attorney and New York State Police** **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

On February 9, 2025, Sam Norquist's family reported him missing. Within days the New York State Police, Troop E, started an investigation into his disappearance. State Police investigators alerted the Ontario District Attorney's Office that the circumstances behind Sam's disappearance appeared suspicious. The investigation quickly evolved into an extensive multi-location search for Sam. On February 12, 2025, remains consistent with Sam's description were located in neighboring Yates County. Further investigation revealed that Sam was killed in Ontario County and was transported to Yates County in an effort to conceal his murder.

The Ontario County District Attorney's Office and New York State Police, Troop E, who have been jointly investigating the death of Sam Nordquist, would like to address multiple inquiries from across our community, New York State, and the entire nation. There have been many questions as to whether Sam's murder was a hate crime. A "hate crime" in New York is defined in Penal Law Sect. 485.05, as an offense committed "in whole or in substantial part because of a belief or perception regarding the race, color, national origin, ancestry, gender, gender identity or expression, religion, religious practice, age, disability or sexual orientation of a person, regardless of whether the belief or perception is correct."

We are still in the early stages of this investigation. While significant evidence has been obtained, we are continuing to follow-up on leads brought to the State Police. We urge the community not to speculate into the motive behind the murder as we work to find justice for Sam.

At this time we have no indication that Sam's murder was a hate crime. To help alleviate the understandable concern his murder could be a hate crime, we are disclosing that Sam and his assailants were known to each other, identified as LGBTQ+, and at least one of the defendants lived with Sam in the time period leading up to the instant offense.

The District Attorney's Office and the New York State Police are committed to providing a safe community for all people. We share the community's shock at such a heinous act of violence, and understand the fear circulating amongst members of the LGBTQ+ community. We will follow any and all leads to ensure that the motive for this murder is uncovered.

Finally, we would like to address concerns that have been raised with respect to the use of she/her pronouns in legal documents. While certain legal documents must refer to Sam's full name at birth, we are committed to respecting his memory and identity as consistently as legally possible.

We remain focused on holding these individuals accountable, and will continue to work tirelessly to complete the investigation into Sam's murder.

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