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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Re: Verdict and Conclusion In Juvenile Gang-Related Double-Murder Case: Daqwontay Cage:
Kern County Juvenile Court Case JW141644-03**

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant juvenile adjudication in a homicide case today. In a case presented by Deputy District Attorney Esther Schlaerth, a Juvenile Kern County Superior Court Judge on January 12, 2022, found it to be true that now-16-year-old minor Daqwontay Cage committed two counts of first-degree murder, one against an 18 year-old victim. and another against a 17 year old minor, and an additional charge of active participation in a criminal street gang. These findings of true are the juvenile equivalent to a finding of guilty in an adult criminal case. The court also found it to be true the enhancements for committing a felony in furtherance of a criminal street gang, use of a firearm, and causing great bodily harm.

On November 18, 2020, two victims, an 18-year-old and a 17-year-old were shot multiple times through the passenger side window of their vehicle as they were stopped at the intersection of Niles Street and Fairfax Road in Bakersfield, and died from their injuries. Daqwontay Cage was identified as the shooter and was 15 years-old at the time he committed the murders, about six months prior to his sixteenth birthday. The trial revealed evidence that Cage had recently been “jumped in” to a local street gang and that he and two other gang members followed the victims’ vehicle until it stopped. At that point, Cage exited the vehicle and walked past several other cars before approaching the passenger side of the victims’ vehicle and fired 11 shots into the passenger side window before fleeing. Cage and those with him prior to the shooting bragged about committing the crime the next day. Evidence also showed that Cage bragged to a probation officer 3 months later that he had committed multiple murders for the gang.

Cage was not eligible for transfer to adult court jurisdiction pursuant to Senate Bill 1391, a state law passed in 2018 which came into effect in 2019. This recent law categorically prohibits the transfer of any minor to adult court when the minor was 14 or 15 years old at the time the offense occurred and prohibits the trying of 14- and 15-year-old offenders as an adult regardless of the number and severity of the crimes alleged to have been committed. Were it not for Senate Bill 1391, a Juvenile Court Judge would have discretion to permit a 15-year-old to be transferred to adult court in serious and violent crime cases, including murder. In adult court, Cage would have faced a maximum sentence of up to 110 years to life

based on the charges alleged. The enactment of Senate Bill 1391 made it impossible for the District Attorney or Juvenile Court to transfer this double-murder case to adult court.

Today, on February 2, 2022, Cage was committed to the APEX Facility, a Kern County Secure Youth Treatment Facility that was established to transition California Division of Juvenile Justice youth to local custody upon its closure by the state in 2021. The minor's base term of commitment at APEX is seven years with the juvenile court's jurisdiction ending by the minor's 25th birthday. Absent unusual or extraordinary circumstances, Cage is expected to be released on his 25th birthday, in less than nine years.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the result, stating: "It has long been recognized that many juvenile cases should be treated differently than adults, but recent laws have gone too far in providing leniency to teenagers who engage in extremely violent, gang-related murders. The victims, their families, and the community at large deserve justice and protection from a double murderer that cannot come solely from the limited role that the juvenile justice system fills. When teenagers commit multiple gang-related murders, laws must permit penalties that match the crime to ensure justice and public safety. This case is yet another example of how recent pro-crime and anti-victim legislation leaves all Californians exposed to increasing violence and does not honor victims' rights."