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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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DEREK OWEN CUELLAR-TORRES PLEADS GUILTY IN HOMICIDE
CASE

HILLSBORO, Ore- On July 7, 2025, Derek Owen Cuellar-Torres pleaded guilty to murder in the second degree with a firearm and attempted murder in the first degree with a firearm. Washington County Circuit Court Judge Ricardo Menchaca then sentenced the defendant to life in prison with a minimum of 32.5 years. Senior Deputy District Attorneys John Gerhard and Dustin Staten prosecuted this case.

On October 21, 2023, the two victims in this case, aged 17 and 16 at the time, attended a birthday party in Hillsboro. The brother of the teen celebrating her birthday felt the victims were being disrespectful. He contacted his friends, including the defendant, who were members of a local gang, to help him confront the two victims.

The brother drove the defendant and three others back to the brother's home to confront the victims. The defendant and one of the other teenagers were armed with handguns. The brother and another teen went inside and lured the victims and others outside, while the defendant and a second teen hid in the shadows on the side of the house. When the victims got outside, the defendant and the second teenager opened fire on the victims. Two people were struck by gunfire. The 17-year-old victim, Jesus Copado-Oropeza, died from his wounds, and the other victim suffered non-fatal injuries. The defendant, victims, and other involved teens knew each other from attending Hillsboro High School. A total of 22 shell casings were recovered at the scene.

Hillsboro police launched an investigation and quickly identified the defendant and the second teenager as suspects in the shooting. Investigators confronted them, and they both admitted to their involvement. Investigators later found text messages between the defendant and his gang associates where the defendant complained that he was "losing time" and wanted to "catch a body" before he turned 18. In another chat, the defendant's gang associate warned him that he would get charged as an adult for committing murder, but the defendant dismissed those concerns, saying he would blame alcohol and drugs for his decisions and would avoid punishment. In another group chat, the defendant bragged about murdering Jesus Copado-Oropeza and claimed that he could now become a cartel assassin.

The defendant was less than 30 days from his 18th birthday at the time of the crime, but pursuant to juvenile justice reforms in 2019 (SB 1008), the defendant was required to be initially prosecuted as a juvenile. The defendant was transferred to adult court for prosecution after a

waiver proceeding. However, the juvenile justice reforms will make the defendant eligible for parole consideration after 15 years and conditional release after serving half of his sentence. SB 1008 does not give an elected judge the authority to limit or delay parole eligibility or conditional release consideration.

The Washington County District Attorney's Office commends the investigative work of Detectives Devin Rigo and Anthony Johnson of the Hillsboro Police Department on this case.

Mr. Cuellar-Torres will be transferred to the Oregon Department of Corrections to begin serving his sentence at the Oregon Youth Authority.