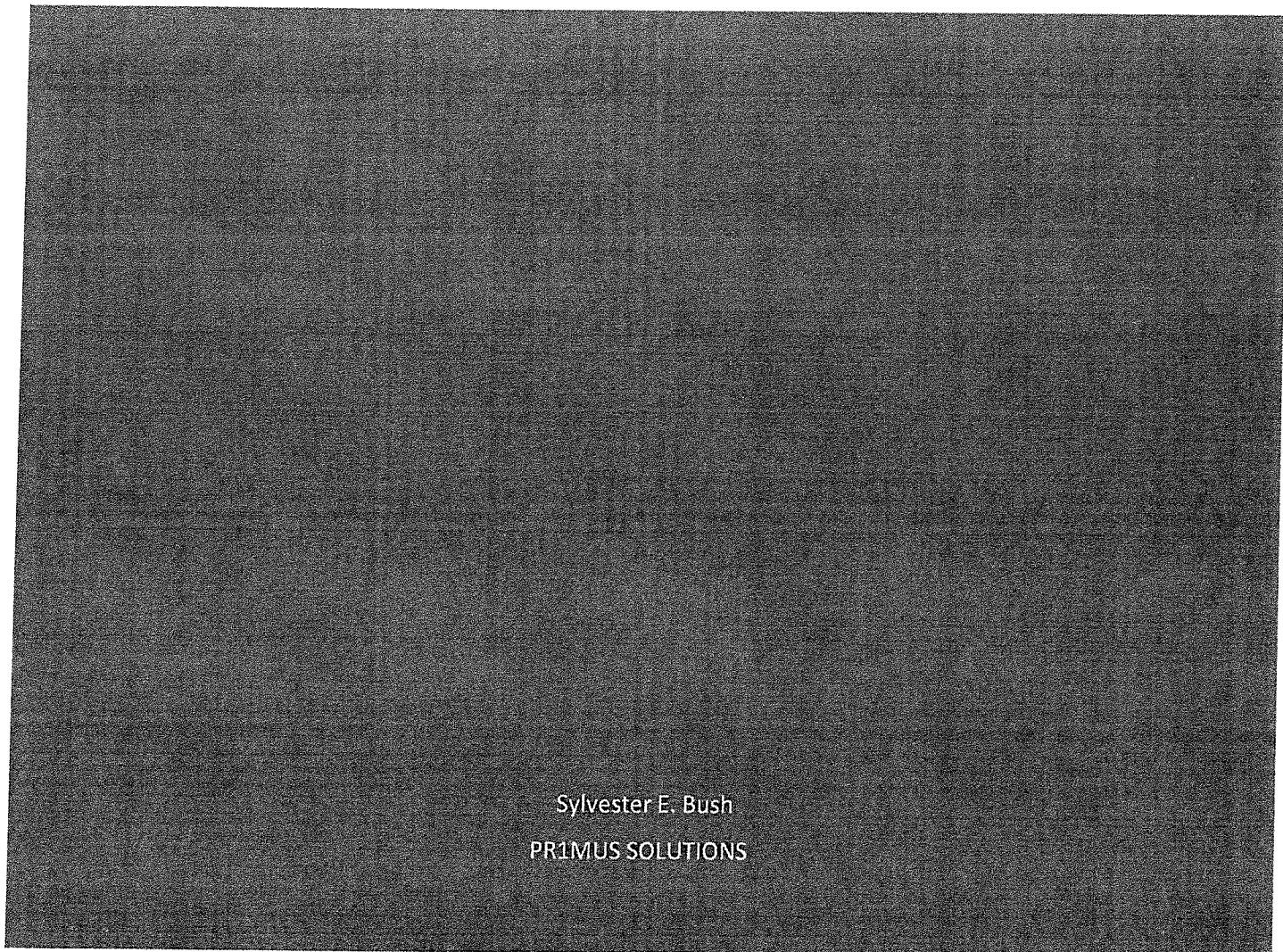




OFFICER AARON NICHOLS #584



Sylvester E. Bush
PR1MUS SOLUTIONS

Independent Assessment of Internal Review Conducted by the Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office

During the first week of April 2022, Sangamon County State's Attorney Dan Wright was informed of hateful and inappropriate social media statements by former Springfield Police Officer Aaron Nichols which related to Jewish, Black, and LGBTQ persons. The Springfield Police Department promptly began an internal investigation which is detailed in Springfield Police Department (SPD) Chief Ken Scarlette's Final Report, a copy of which I received and reviewed prior to completion of this report.

State's Attorney Wright immediately undertook a comprehensive internal review of cases in which Nichols was involved. The purpose of such review was to identify evidence, if any, that Nichols' conduct during the performance of his law enforcement duties reflected bias, prejudice, or other misconduct in his official capacity as an SPD Officer. Following State's Attorney Wright's confirmation that no individuals were currently in custody as a result of arrests made by Nichols, he requested and received records from SPD reflecting all police reports related to incidents involving Nichols.

During the first week following exposure of Nichols' hateful social media activity, State's Attorney Wright reached out to leaders of the Springfield Branch of the NAACP and the Jewish Federation to discuss options for a community event to inform the public of steps taken immediately by SPD and State's Attorney Wright, the planned investigative steps moving forward, and to promote unity against hate in all forms. On April 5, 2022, Wright attended a general membership meeting of the NAACP to discuss the incident and the internal review commenced by the State's Attorney's Office earlier that week.

On April 6, 2022, State's Attorney Wright submitted a request for discretionary decertification of Nichols to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board which followed the decertification request filed by SPD. Both decertification requests sought a determination that Nichols could never again work in law enforcement. On April 7, 2022, State's Attorney Wright met with Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, United States Attorney Gregory Harris, SPD Chief Scarlette, and NAACP President Teresa Haley to discuss the incident, related investigation, and a potential community unity event.

On April 12, 2022, Wright convened a diverse group of community leaders representing a wide range of persons targeted by Nichols' hateful social media activity, including the NAACP, National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE), Frontiers' Club, One in a Million, Major Community Outreach, Springfield Jewish Federation, Springfield ACLU, Springfield Urban League, and the Phoenix Center. Wright updated the group on the status of the SCSAO's internal review, sought feedback regarding the review process, and pledged to publicly disclose the results.

On April 13, 2022, Wright joined a panel of law enforcement officials for a community unity forum at Springfield Southeast High School which involved robust public discussion. The panel also included Illinois Attorney General Kwame Raoul, United States Attorney Gregory Harris, and SPD Chief Scarlette.

On May 7, 2022, SA Wright, Chief Scarlette and members of the leadership teams from both agencies participated in an interactive online workshop entitled "Extremism in Law Enforcement: Understanding the Problem and Crafting Solutions". This training program was hosted by the University of Southern California's Safe Communities Institute and the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism (GPAHE). Following that workshop and after learning of the proactive steps taken by SPD and State's Attorney Wright, GPAHE Co-Founder Dr. Heidi Beirich commended the "strong working relationship that exists between the Springfield Police Department and the Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office. This relationship allowed for rapid and thorough inter-agency cooperation..." which "serves as a model of best practices for other communities faced with similar circumstances." A copy of Dr. Beirich's letter to Springfield Mayor James Langfelder is attached.

Since 2016, SPD and the local chapter of NOBLE have worked closely regarding police officer recruitment and community relations. This relationship continues today with the SCSAO as an active participant. On the consideration of the Springfield NAACP, Sangamon County engaged me to conduct an independent assessment of the SCSAO's internal review of cases involving Nichols. Copies of my *Curriculum Vitae* and the Agreement for Professional Services are attached. The

Agreement included an hourly rate of \$62.50, which mirrored the applicable federal rate, and a cap on total fees of \$3000.

SPD identified all police reports of incidents in which Nichols was involved from 2004-2022. The SCSAO then retrieved all available reports from the electronic report system utilized by SPD. Reports from 2004-2008 were not available as they were previously destroyed in the normal course of SPD's document destruction procedures.

Independent Review and Assessment

I personally reviewed all field reports provided by SPD which documented incidents involving Nichols between 2009 and 2022. As part of the SCSAO's internal review process, State's Attorney Wright created and utilized a report assessment tool entitled "A. Nichols – Police Record Review Sheet" which included spaces to document the following for each Nichols report:

Date; Identification of the reviewing attorney (State's Attorney Wright personally reviewed every report); Identification of the record/report number; Whether charges were filed; Case status/disposition; and whether there was evidence sufficient to support a conviction independent of testimony from Nichols.

I met with State's Attorney Wright on two occasions at the Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office prior to completion of my final report. During our first meeting, State's Attorney Wright provided relevant background information and explained his internal review process. He made it clear that I would have complete independence to accomplish the scope of the engagement and prepare a final report for public release. I met with State's Attorney Wright a second time to provide an update on my review, return the first set of Nichols records, and pick up the remaining records for review.

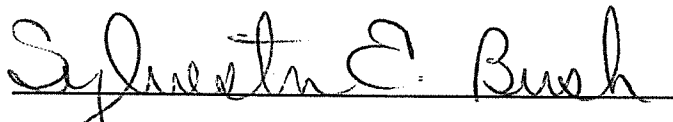
Conclusion

Following completion of my comprehensive evaluation of the SCSAO's internal review process and all available SPD records, I found no evidence of criminal conduct or professional misconduct by Nichols in the performance of his law enforcement duties. I further concluded that State's Attorney Wright's response to this incident was not only swift and comprehensive, but went above and beyond

under difficult circumstances to ensure an internal review worthy of the public's trust and confidence. He quickly and publicly denounced Nichols' statements and drew upon pre-existing relationships with a diverse group of stakeholders in a proactive and transparent manner. State's Attorney Wright clearly communicated his plans for an internal review of Nichols' conduct to determine whether his views regarding Jewish, Black, and LGBTQ persons had any impact upon the performance of his official duties and any prosecution undertaken by the State's Attorney's Office. Upon completion of State's Attorney Wright's internal review, his findings were made a part of SPD Chief Scarlette's Final Report and released to the public. A copy of Wright's September 7, 2022 letter to Chief Scarlette is attached.

I concur with Dr. Beirich of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism that the proactive, collaborative, thorough, and transparent review process implemented by State's Attorney Wright and SPD is a model of best practices in response to the exposure of Nichols' racist, anti-Semitic, and anti-LGBTQ social media statements.

December 6, 2022


Sylvester E. Bush

GPAHE

Global Project Against Hate and Extremism

Mayor James Langfelder
City of Springfield, Illinois
800 East Monroe
Springfield, IL 62701

Dear Mayor Langfelder,

My name is Heidi Beirich and I am the co-founder of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism, a non-profit that works to counter racist organizations transnationally and support diverse democracies. I also co-instruct the course, "Extremists in Law Enforcement: Understanding the Problem and Crafting Solutions," at the University of Southern California's Price Safe Communities Institute. The course aims to assist law enforcement professionals in identifying and rooting out extremists in the ranks who threaten the communities law enforcement serves, the cases law enforcement brings, and the integrity and culture of law enforcement agencies.

I am writing to commend your police chief, Ken Scarlette, for how he and his department have handled the very difficult situation after it was disclosed that a member of the Springfield force was involved in neo-Nazi activities. Chief Scarlette did the exact right thing by quickly suspending the police powers of the officer involved and then launching an investigation into the officer's activities.

Chief Scarlette went much further in addressing the fallout from his officer's activities. He engaged the community in the difficult conversations that inevitably follow such an incident and sought their help in rebuilding trust between the department and the community. I also want to commend the strong working relationship that exists between the Springfield Police Department and the Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office. This relationship allowed for rapid and thorough inter-agency cooperation in this trying circumstance. I believe this cooperation serves as a model of best practices for other communities faced with similar circumstances.

Chief Scarlette and several of his officers then took my class, along with Sangamon County State's Attorney Daniel Wright and members of his office. They were very helpful in discussing such a difficult situation and in seeking solutions. Chief Scarlette, his officers and the State's Attorney's staff provided invaluable insights for other officers taking the class and I will now be able to share those insights in future trainings.

And Chief Scarlette has done even more. When I reached out to him earlier this summer about sharing his experiences at a major anti-hate conference in a way that can be helpful to other departments, he kindly offered to do so. I am thrilled that Chief Scarlette will be participating on a panel, "Views from Law Enforcement Leaders: What the Law Enforcement Community is Doing to Combat Extremism," at the 2022 Eradicate Hate conference. The conference was

created out of the tragedy of the 2018 Tree of Life synagogue shooting, which was perpetrated by a white supremacist. The panel's focus is specifically on solutions and Chief Scarlette's navigation of this issue, his knowledge of effective inter-agency cooperation, and real-world experience will be extremely helpful to others who may face such situations in the future.

I want to thank Chief Scarlette for engaging in a topic that is often very difficult to address. His transparency and honesty will be a help to many others in law enforcement and the communities they serve.

Sincerely,

Heidi Beirich

Heidi Beirich, Ph.D.
VP & Co-Founder
GPAHE
heidi@globalextrémism.org
@heidibeirich
@globalextrémism
334-207-6587

(copy)

AGREEMENT FOR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Dear Chief Bush:

I appreciate your willingness to conduct an independent review of the internal procedures undertaken by the Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office following confirmed allegations of hateful and inappropriate social media activity by former Springfield Police Officer, Aaron Nichols. The below terms will formalize the engagement which you have already begun following our meeting earlier this month.

SCOPE OF ENGAGEMENT:

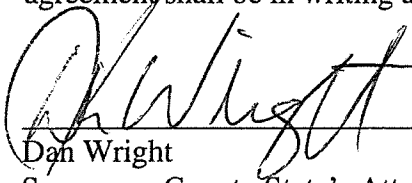
Review process and results of Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office internal review of cases involving former SPD Officer Aaron Nichols.

FEE:

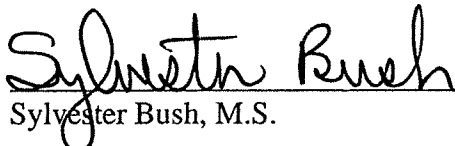
Total fees at the hourly rate of ~~62.50~~ ^{63,000.} shall not exceed ~~\$2,500.~~

ENTIRE AGREEMENT:

The undersigned parties recognize that the above terms represent the entire agreement and that no oral agreements exist regarding the subject matter hereof. Any modification of the terms of this agreement shall be in writing and signed by both parties.



Dan Wright
Sangamon County State's Attorney



Sylvester Bush, M.S.



DANIEL K. WRIGHT
SANGAMON COUNTY
STATE'S ATTORNEY

Room 402, County Complex
200 South Ninth Street
Springfield, IL 62701

Telephone: 217/753-6690
Facsimile: 217/535-3179

September 7, 2022

Chief Ken Scarlette
Springfield Police Department
800 E. Monroe
Springfield, IL 62701

Re: A. Nichols: State's Attorney's Office Review

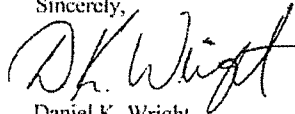
Chief Scarlette:

Thank you for providing the SPD Internal Affairs investigation materials for my review. I appreciate the prompt, thorough, and professional manner in which SPD completed the investigation of this matter under your leadership. Based upon our review of the SPD Internal Affairs investigation, relevant reports and other information previously provided by SPD, my office has determined there is insufficient evidence to prove a criminal offense beyond a reasonable doubt or to conclude that Nichols committed misconduct in the course of his official duties. Accordingly, the Sangamon County State's Attorney's Office will not be filing charges at this time. However, as you know, I previously submitted a request for decertification to the Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board in support of the decertification request submitted by SPD. In the interest of public trust and confidence in the process and outcome of my internal review, I have engaged Sylvester Bush, M.S. who previously served as Chief of the Peoria Park District Police Department and Cook County Forest Preserve Police Department to conduct an independent review of steps taken by my office in response to the revelation of Nichols' hateful and inappropriate social media conduct. Chief Bush was recommended by the Springfield NAACP.

I am grateful to have had the opportunity to participate with SPD leadership in the University of Southern California's Sol Price School of Public Policy - Safe Communities Institute seminar entitled "Extremists in Law Enforcement: Understanding the Problem and Crafting Solutions". This interactive program was extremely informative, allowed SPD to share common experiences with other police agencies, and facilitated a robust discussion of best practices to combat extremism in law enforcement with experts in the field like Dr. Heidi Beirich of the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism. I commend SPD for the agency's proactive efforts to identify training opportunities such as the one provided by the Safe Communities Institute. As a newly-appointed Chief at the time of this incident, you immediately and transparently engaged with the public leaving no doubt that SPD would fully investigate the matter and take affirmative steps to

prevent those with such abhorrent views about fellow human beings from joining your agency. You have also put your words into action by incorporating community feedback into the SPD hiring process. The People of Springfield and other law enforcement agencies have benefitted from your exemplary response to these deeply disturbing circumstances. Your words and actions continue to send an unequivocal message that the Springfield Police Department will not tolerate hate in any form.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D.K. Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of each name being capitalized and prominent.

Daniel K. Wright
Sangamon County State's Attorney

Daniel K. Wright
Sangamon County State's Attorney
Sangamon County Complex, Room 402
200 South 9th Street
Springfield, Illinois 62701
(217) 753-6398

SYLVESTER E.BUSH

(309)256-9017

sylvesterbush769@gmail.com *<https://linkedin.com/in/sylvester-bush-5bb11a/a/>

Provide leadership and guidance as Chief of Police with 20+ years of extensive training and experience in Law Enforcement. Visionary Operation Executive with solid experience managing all levels of multiple projects including budgeting and administration. Accomplish Executive with demonstrated ability to deliver mission critical results. Hands on experience in partnering with community groups to understand issues as it relates to the community. Applies strong mentorship skills for staff relationships to bring out the highest potential in team members.

KEY SKILLS

- Critical Thinker/Strategic Planner
- Collaborator/ Problem Solver
- Emergency Management
- Excellent Interpersonal Skills
- Investigations/Interview Skills
- Diversity/Inclusion Specialist
- Resourceful/Innovative
- Counselor/Advisor/Supervisor
- Microsoft Office Suite
- People Management
- Leadership Development
- Project Management
- Staff Development
- Team Player
- Supervised and Trained Armed Officers

ACCOMPLISHMENTS / ACTIVITIES

- Established Intergovernmental Agreement for Body Worn Camera (BWC) (2018) (2020)
- Established Intergovernmental Agreement with Illinois Central College for Conceal Carry Classes (2016)
- Restructured the Field Training Officer (FTO) Program
- Ability to patrol 70,000 acres, 691Facilities, 5 Campgrounds, 6 Nature Centers, 23 Lakes, 3 Swimming Pools, 1 Tree Zipline, 350 Miles of paved and unpaved trails
- Restructured and brought stability to the Forest Preserves of Cook County Police Department Better relationship with the local and nearby Police Departments, the Cook County Sheriff's Department, and the Illinois Conservation Police
- Reduced operating cost within the first year as Chief of Police
- Established a higher level of expectations for the Department
- Completed and signed the Ten Shared Principles Created by Illinois Association of Chief of Police and the NAACP (2021)
- Current member of the International Association of Chief of Police (IACP)
- Established the COVID 19 Pandemic Award for the Police Department
- Illinois Park Law Enforcement Association (IPLEA)
- Current member and past President of the National Organization of Black Law Enforcement Executives (NOBLE)
- Illinois Association of Chief of Police
- Executive member on the Illinois Association of Chief of Police
- Attend Cook County Board meetings, county volunteers' meetings, etc.
- Attend community events i.e., National Night Out Against Crimes, city police etc.
- Upgraded police vehicles, vehicles' computer systems and office computers

SYLVESTER E BUSH
(309) 256-9017
Sylvesterbush769@gmail.com

EMPLOYMENT

JANUARY 2020 TO APRIL 2021

CHIEF OF POLICE

FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY, IL

Directed and manage the largest Forest Preserve in the entire country. Supervision of 130 departmental members while staying within the department ten \$10 million budget. Service the population of 5.1 million in Cook County, Illinois. Signing of the Ten Shared Principles document created by the Illinois Chiefs of Police and the NAACP. Completed the department's training on Implicit Bias Techniques.

NOVEMBER 2008 TO DECEMBER 2019

CHIEF OF POLICE, PEORIA PARK DISTRICT POLICE DEPARTMENT, PEORIA, IL

Managed, directed, and supervised all operational and administrative units of the Peoria Park District Police Department; maintained operational readiness of all units, disciplines, and provided leadership and served as a resource to personnel; population 110,000.

SEPTEMBER 1997 TO OCTOBER 2008

CAMPUS POLICE OFFICER / GRANT ADMINISTRATOR

PEORIA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT 150, PEORIA, IL

Public safety work in the protection of life and property for 27 active school buildings, including three traditional high schools, and the enforcement of laws and ordinances enforced by the Illinois School Codes and the State of Illinois Criminal Codes. Prevented crimes by immediately reporting all unusual, unauthorized, and illegal activities on the schools' premises. Responded quickly and effectively to all security violations and duress alarms. Responsibility to negotiate, mediate, and resolve conflicts and disputes. Responded to all calls for services involving crimes and assistance; administered emergency medical treatment when necessary; safe guarded sensitive and private information concerning individuals and personal and business reputations. Maintained accurate and detailed logs of all events that occurred during each shift. Implemented the Gang Resistance Education and Training (G.R.E.A.T.) Program.

EDUCATION

GRADUATED - 2020

MASTER'S IN SCIENCE CRIMINAL JUSTICE/SECURITY, UNIVERSITY OF PHOENIX

GRADUATED - 1987

BACHELOR OF ARTS: BUSINESS, LORAS COLLEGE, DUBUQUE, IA

SYLVESTER E BUSH

(309) 256-9017

Sylvesterbush769@gmail.com

EDUCATION (continue)

- Illinois Law Enforcement Training and Standards Board Executive Institute
- Implicit Bias Training and Education
- John E. Reid Interviewing and Interrogation
- First Responder Training for Computer Investigation
- Police Executive Role in the 21st Century
- Club Drug Recognition
- Heroin on Steroids Training (2017)
- Bloodborne Pathogens (BBP) Training
- Incident Command System–Law Enforcement (FEMA)
- Active Shooter: Critical Incidents/School Violence
- Senior Management Courses
- Skilled in Conflict Resolution
- Leading Beyond Tradition
- New Chief of Police Orientation Course
- Electronic Fingerprinting Certification (Illinois)

REFERENCES

MITCHELL R. DAVIS III, CHIEF OF POLICE, THE VILLAGE OF HAZEL CREST

3000 W. 170th Place
Hazel Crest, IL 60429
(708) 335-9640

BRIAN FENGEL, DIRECTOR, THE MOBILE TRAINING UNIT #7

5407 N. University Street
Peoria, IL 61614
(309) 690-7350

ARNOLD A. RANDELL, GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT, FOREST PRESERVES OF COOK COUNTY

536 N. Harlem Avenue
River Forest, IL 60305
(708) 771-1510

DR. JESSIE LEE, JR., PRESIDENT & CEO, LEEDONE ASSOCIATES, LLC

(856) 207-3636