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NEWS RELEASE –

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Denver Grand Jury Indicts 24 Individuals on 175 Criminal Counts

DENVER—With most of the defendants now in custody, the Denver District Attorney is announcing that a Denver Grand Jury indicted 24 individuals on 175 counts last month. The group is accused of conspiring to commit a multitude of crimes between February 5, 2017, and October 2019, to support their illegal drug habits. They face charges collectively and individually ranging from violating Colorado's Organized Crime Control Act (COCCA), attempted murder, aggravated motor vehicle theft, impersonating a peace officer, burglary, assault, forgery and possession with intent to manufacture or distribute controlled substances among other charges.

"At the heart of this indictment is an all-too-familiar tale of how drug addiction fuels criminal activity," said Denver DA Beth McCann. "We need, as a community, to focus on treatment and a public health response to substance abuse to help address associated criminal behavior. This type of illegal activity negatively affected many individuals, businesses and communities throughout the Denver-metro area."

Many of the indicted lived together and shared stolen money, property, automobiles, IDs, food, clothing and illegal drugs. At least 28 vehicles stolen across the Denver-metro area are believed to be attributed to the group's coordinated activities. The group is accused of stealing the vehicles to commit other crimes including burglaries. They would then trade or sell the stolen property, guns, social security cards, credit cards, bikes, golf clubs, professional makeup kits and numerous other items to acquire methamphetamine, heroin and cocaine. One defendant pretended to be a peace officer while he was stealing a vehicle and then caused bodily injury to an actual Denver Police officer while being apprehended.

The primary members of the enterprise, all charged with COCCA, are Thomas Bridges (age 27), Donald McGrath (age 39) and Sarah McGrath (age 35), and also included Brittany Giardino (age 22), William Jokay-Szilagji (age 28), Jeremy Rodgers (age 33), James Scott (age 24). Other members include Karen Andres (age 29), Estevan Barrientos (age 22), Alberto Benipayo (age 42), William Carson (age 66), Alexander Cole (age 25), Essence Forsey (age 23), Michele Lilla (age 24), Kory Love (age 30), Julie Martinez (age 38), Nicole Pedroza (age 35), Anton Pleasant (age 44), Frederick Ricciardelli (age 24), Gerardo Sanchez (age 24), Robert Stanley (age 33), Lee Swink (age 46), Kevin Willenbrecht (age 30) and Jennifer Williamsen (age 26).

This indictment was made possible thanks to the coordinated efforts of the Denver Police Department, Aurora Police Department, US Postal Inspection Service, Colorado State Patrol, CMATT and various other law enforcement agencies. Each defendant will be tried separately.

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The filing of a criminal charge is merely a formal accusation that an individual(s) committed a crime(s) under Colorado laws. A defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty. See Colo. RPC 3.6