



Elliot Kolkovich

Summit County Prosecutor

For Immediate Release

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PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH ANNOUNCES CONVICTION FOR MURDER OF ERNESTINE STALLINGS

AKRON, OH – Today, Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich announced that Jontae Watkins, 26, was found guilty for the 2023 murder of 34-year-old Ernestine Stallings outside the Dollar Tree located on West Market Street in Akron.

Watkins entered a plea of no contest and was found guilty of one count of Aggravated Murder with a 3-Year Firearm Specification – an Unclassified Felony.

Additionally, Watkins pleaded guilty to separate charges stemming from this investigation:

- One count of Aggravated Trafficking in Drugs with 1 Specification for Forfeiture of Money in a Drug Case and 2 Specifications for Forfeiture of a Gun in a Drug Case – a 1st Degree Felony; and
- One count of Trafficking in Marihuana with 1 Specification for Forfeiture of Money in a Drug Case and 2 Specifications for Forfeiture of a Gun in a Drug Case – a 3rd Degree Felony.

“This reckless act of misplaced vengeance took the life of an innocent woman. Violence in response to pain only creates more loss for our community. Our thoughts are with Ernestine Stallings’ loved ones as they grieve this senseless tragedy. I’d also like to thank the Akron Police Department for their investigative efforts in this case,” said Prosecutor Kolkovich.

In July 2023, Ernestine Stallings and her fiancée visited the Dollar Tree on West Market Street. Watkins, who witnessed Stallings entering the store, mistook her for another person involved in a prior incident. Watkins pulled into the parking lot, waited for Stallings to emerge, and then shot her six times in the back and torso before fleeing the scene. FLOCK cameras and various surveillance footage connected Watkins to the case, and Akron Police executed a search warrant at his home. Police seized 373 grams of meth, two firearms, and \$33,413 while executing the warrant. During the investigation, Watkins confessed to Stallings’ murder, admitting it was a case of misidentification.

Watkins is scheduled to be sentenced on December 12th, 2025. He faces a life sentence.

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