



# Elliot Kolkovich

---

## Summit County Prosecutor

### For Immediate Release

Thursday, December 18, 2025

CONTACT: [Elaine Vilem](#)

(330) 643-8386

## PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH ANNOUNCES LIFE SENTENCE FOR MURDER OF ERNESTINE STALLINGS

AKRON, OH – Today, Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich announced that Jontae Watkins, 26, was sentenced to life in prison for the 2023 murder of 34-year-old Ernestine Stallings outside the Dollar Tree located on West Market Street in Akron. Watkins will be eligible for parole after 33 years.

In October, 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:

1. One count of Aggravated Trafficking in Drugs, a 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Felony, with:
  1. One Specification for Forfeiture of Money in a Drug Case, and
  2. Two Specifications for Forfeiture of a Gun in a Drug Case; and
2. One count of Trafficking in Marijuana, a 3<sup>rd</sup> Degree Felony, with:
  1. One Specification for Forfeiture of Money in a Drug Case, and
  2. Two Specifications for Forfeiture of a Gun in a Drug Case.

**“Ernestine Stallings was an innocent woman whose life was taken for no reason other than a reckless act of misidentification and a so-called attempt at justice. This tragedy never should have happened. While today’s sentence cannot undo the devastation Jontae Watkins caused, we hope it offers Ernestine’s family some measure of closure,”** 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.

###