

STATE OF FLORIDA

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR EXECUTIVE ORDER NUMBER 21-251 (State Attorney Executive Assignment)

WHEREAS, the Honorable MELISSA W. NELSON, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida, has advised Governor RON DESANTIS that William Paul Cooper was arrested for transmission of material harmful to minors and contributing to the delinquency of a minor; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable MELISSA W. NELSON has also advised the Governor that William Paul Copper is related to an employee of the state attorney's office; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable MELISSA W. NELSON, to avoid a conflict of interest or any appearance of impropriety, has voluntarily disqualified herself and has requested the executive assignment of another State Attorney with respect to the investigation and prosecution of this case and all related matters; and

WHEREAS, the Honorable JOHN F. DURRETT, State Attorney for the Third Judicial Circuit of Florida, has agreed to accept an executive assignment in this matter; and

WHEREAS, it is in the best interests of the State of Florida and of the ends of justice that the Honorable JOHN F. DURRETT discharge the duties of the Honorable MELISSA W. NELSON pursuant to section 27.14, Florida Statutes.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, RON DESANTIS, Governor of Florida, in obedience to my solemn constitutional duty to "take care that the laws be faithfully executed," and pursuant to the Constitution and laws of the State of Florida, issue the following Executive Order, effective immediately:

Section 1. The Honorable JOHN F. DURRETT, State Attorney for the Third Judicial Circuit of Florida, referred to as the "Assigned State Attorney," is assigned to discharge the duties

of the Honorable MELISSA W. NELSON, State Attorney for the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida, as they relate to the investigation, prosecution, and all matters related to William Paul Cooper.

Section 2. The Assigned State Attorney or one or more Assistant State Attorneys and Investigators, who have been designated by the Assigned State Attorney, shall proceed immediately to the Fourth Judicial Circuit of Florida, and are vested with the authority to perform the duties prescribed herein.

Section 3. All residents of the Fourth Judicial Circuit are requested, and all public officials are directed, to cooperate and render whatever assistance is necessary to the Assigned State Attorney, so that justice may be served.

Section 4. The period of this Executive Assignment shall be for one (1) year, to and including December 1, 2022.

Section 5. The Assigned State Attorney shall notify the Governor on or before November 1, 2022, if additional time is required.



IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand and have caused the Great Seal of the State of Florida to be affixed at Tallahassee, this 1st day of December, 2021.



RON DESANTIS, GOVERNOR

ATTEST:



SECRETARY OF STATE

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TALLAHASSEE, FL

FILED