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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: December 6, 2024
RE: State v. John Thomas Preston Jr.

On Thursday, December 5, 2024, John Thomas Preston Jr. was found guilty of Felon in Possession of a Firearm, Felon in Possession of a Rifle/Shotgun, False Statement to a Police Officer, and multiple related firearms and ammunition offenses following a three-day jury trial before the Honorable Diane Adkins-Tobin in the Harford County Circuit Court.

Evidence presented in trial proved that on January 10, 2023, Deputies with the Harford County Sheriff's Office responded to a residence in Bel Air, Maryland for reports of a shooting. Deputies made contact with the Defendant, John Thomas Preston Jr., who was suffering from a gunshot entry wound on his left thigh and a gunshot exit wound on his left shin. Deputies recovered a bullet in Preston's sock. Preston told deputies that he was arriving home after being followed by a vehicle and was ultimately shot upon exiting his vehicle. Preston was unable to provide any identifying information for the vehicle or the alleged shooter and told police multiple conflicting versions of the incident. A shell casing and blood was located near an exterior side entrance of his residence. Through the course of their investigation, detectives began to suspect Preston made up this story to cover up accidentally shooting himself in the leg.

Detectives ran a criminal background check for Preston and learned that he was prohibited from possessing a regulated firearm due to prior felony convictions for Possession with the Intent to Distribute Controlled Dangerous Substances. Detectives executed a search warrant for Preston's residence. During that search warrant, they recovered a short-barreled shotgun with an obliterated serial number, and a shell casing matching the one found on the exterior of the residence was also located in Preston's bedroom. A Rossi .357 revolver and .45 caliber ammunition were also recovered from the residence.

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Following the conviction, State's Attorney Alison M. Healey offered the following comment: "I will always be a strong advocate for responsible, legal gun ownership, but when a convicted felon blatantly ignores the restrictions imposed upon him by the law and diverts law enforcement resources into knowingly false investigations, it puts our community at risk. I commend this jury for seeing through the Defendant's false statements and finding him guilty of these offenses."

State's Attorney Healey further expressed thanks to Assistant State's Attorney Gabriella Vazzana for her efforts in securing these firearm and related convictions and to Harford County Sheriff's Office Deputies Tabler and Vasquez and Detectives Sergent and Reynolds for their thorough investigation of this case. Further gratitude goes to Harford County Sheriff's Office Corporal Ghaner and Maryland State Police Firearms Examiner Houser for their expert firearm testimony that was instrumental in securing these convictions.