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For Immediate Release
February 14th, 2025

Andrew Lester Pleads Guilty in the April 2023 Shooting of Ralph Yarl

Liberty, MO – Andrew Lester, 86, pleaded guilty today to Second Degree Assault for shooting Ralph Yarl in April 2023. Yarl, then 16, was shot twice after mistakenly going to Lester's address while trying to pick up his siblings.

Clay County Prosecuting Attorney Zachary Thompson filed an amended charge of Second-Degree Assault, a Class D Felony, after consultation with Yarl and his family. The plea ensures accountability and provides closure for the victim's family. Sentencing is scheduled for March 7, 2025 at 10:AM in Division 4 of the Clay County Courthouse.

"This case centers on the reasonableness of actions taken, not the right to self-defense," said Thompson. "While we support homeowners' rights to protect themselves, shooting an unarmed teenager through a locked door exceeds reasonable bounds. Ralph made an innocent mistake, and the consequences – being shot twice – far exceeded any reasonable response."

The prosecution has requested 5 years incarceration, citing the impact on both the victim and community. The charge carries a maximum sentence of seven years in prison and/or a fine up to \$10,000. Prosecutors filed a brief this morning summarizing the State's position. A sentencing hearing will include evidence and arguments from both sides and victim impact statements before the judge's final determination.

"We have worked closely with Ralph Yarl's family throughout this process, and they support this resolution," Thompson added.