FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

May 26, 2020

Miami Beach—Florida Civil Rights Coalition, P.L.L.C. is defending pro bono two American citizens arrested by Miami Beach Police Department on May 23, 2020, for exercising their constitutional rights. Attorneys Louis Leo IV and Joel Medgebow have filed not guilty pleas on behalf of Tara Higgins and Arthur Johnson, in addition to demands for discovery and jury trials. Public records requests have also been submitted to the city of Miami Beach seeking records, including Miami Beach Police Department (“MBPD”) body camera and CCTV footage.

Despite Miami-Dade State Attorney Katherine Fernandez Rundle’s recent announcement of a plan to release misdemeanor and nonviolent offenders to prevent the spread of coronavirus, Arthur Johnson, as well as Tara Higgins—a photographer and mother of four—were arrested and imprisoned for simply walking onto the beach. Miami Beach has been arbitrarily closed since April under the guise of disease prevention to the entire public—with the exception of individuals awarded permits, like Miami Beach celebrity Robert “Raven” Kraft. Unlike Raven, Tara and Arthur were arrested and imprisoned for going to the beach, forced to wear masks and incarcerated overnight, then charged with multiple criminal misdemeanor offenses including trespassing, resisting arrest without violence and violating an emergency order. The maximum penalty for such offenses, if convicted, includes more than two years imprisonment.

The Florida Civil Rights Coalition has asked the Miami-Dade State Attorney to drop all charges immediately. In an e-mail to Katherine Fernandez Rundle, Louis Leo IV wrote: “No human being should be locked in a cage, masked and denied inalienable rights for simply going to the beach.”

Inquires may be directed to info@floridacivilrights.org.

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