

XAVIER BECERRA
Attorney General



State of California
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

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December 5, 2019

Maggie Fleming
District Attorney
Humboldt County District Attorney's Office
825 Fifth Street, Fourth Floor
Eureka, CA 95501

Dear District Attorney Fleming:

Thank you for your April 5, 2019 letter. We are deeply saddened by the tragic death of David Josiah Lawson. Our deepest condolences go out to the Lawson family and your community.

After receiving your letter, we conducted a careful review of the case to determine whether it is appropriate for the Department of Justice's involvement.

The role of the Attorney General in intervening in a local prosecution is limited. Absent a recusable conflict of interest, the Attorney General's Office generally only takes over a prosecution handled by a District Attorney when there is an abuse of discretion. The District Attorney is given broad discretion in prosecuting criminal cases because she is the official who has been elected by that county to act as its public prosecutor. Based on our internal review of the case, we could not find evidence that you abused your discretion in how you handled the prosecution of this case.

We mourn the tragic loss of Mr. Lawson's life. However, we could not find evidence that calls for the Department of Justice's intervention in the case, and will not be taking any further action in this matter. We are available for any questions you may have regarding the Department of Justice's review of this case.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jeffrey M. Laurence", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JEFFREY M. LAURENCE
Senior Assistant Attorney General

For XAVIER BECERRA
Attorney General