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PRESS RELEASE – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

City of Olympia, Washington Pays \$107,500 to Settle Lawsuit Over Police Misconduct in Mental Health Crisis Incident

(KENT, WA. – May 22, 2024) The City of Olympia settled a federal civil rights violation lawsuit after the Olympia Police Department arrested 22-year-old **Brendan Gee** while officers were responding to a mental health crisis call in August 2020.

That morning, Brendan’s fiancée had a severe mental health crisis, and he was trying to help her when the officers arrived. The lawsuit alleged that Olympia police rushed to conclusions, and assumed Brendan was abusing his fiancée instead of needing emergency help. **Officer Duane Hinrichs, Jr.** allegedly tackled and unlawfully arrested Brendan while **Sergeant Jeff Herbig** stood by and watched. All charges against Brendan were eventually dismissed by Washington State prosecutors, clearing him of any wrongdoing.

[Novo Legal Group, PLLC](#) [filed a civil rights violation lawsuit](#) in a federal court in Tacoma, Washington alleging that the Olympia Police Department violated Brendan’s civil rights by not evaluating the evidence available to them at the scene, showing that Brendan had not harmed his fiancée nor committed any crime, before tackling and arresting him. The suit also claimed the City of Olympia failed to train its police officers on properly responding to mental health crises, continuing a national debate on whether police officers are best suited to respond to such calls.

“Brendan never should have been tackled to the ground, nor arrested. We feel that with proper training and a proper investigation, the officers would have seen that Brendan had not committed any crime and instead, could have helped Brendan and his fiancée through a horrific experience” **said Aaron Slade, Brendan’s attorney at Novo Legal Group.**

“Addressing mental health crises with appropriate care and training can prevent incidents from escalating into violence, ensuring the safety and dignity of those in need. Proper training and accountability in law enforcement are essential in building trust and ensuring that incidents like these do not happen again. It is our hope that this case will serve as a catalyst for further improvements in police training and accountability, ultimately making our communities safer” **said Danielle C. Jefferis, civil rights expert and professor at the University of Nebraska College of Law, and Of Counsel at Novo Legal Group**

“Community safety is enhanced when law enforcement is properly trained to handle situations with care and respect, especially those involving mental health crises” **added Luis Cortes Romero, managing partner for Novo Legal Group’s Washington office.**

In 2021, the year after Brendan’s arrest, the City of Olympia implemented a new program where the city dispatches unarmed crisis responders to mental health calls instead of police. Now, nearly four years after his arrest, Brendan agreed to settle his case against the Defendants, and feels he can finally move forward. The City of Olympia expressly denies any liability in this matter.