

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Notice of Sentencing
Waleska Man Sentenced to Life Without Parole Plus 60 Years for Shaken Baby Death
State vs. Gregory Farrell Davis

June 27, 2025 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that on June 26 Chief Superior Court Judge David L. Cannon Jr. sentenced Gregory Farrell Davis, 28, of Waleska, to life without the possibility of parole plus 60 years for the 2021 murder of 1-year-old James “Jamie” Marco Palacio. This is the maximum sentence allowable by law in the State of Georgia.

On May 1, a Cherokee County jury found Davis guilty of malice murder, felony murder, cruelty to children in the first degree (4 counts), and willful obstruction of law enforcement officers.

Cherokee Sheriff’s Office deputies began investigating this case on April 28, 2021, after responding to a 911 call about an unresponsive baby inside a Waleska home. Cherokee Fire & Emergency Services rushed Jamie to the hospital, where he was declared brain dead on April 30. Jamie had acute injuries to his brain and neck consistent with abusive head trauma, commonly referred to as shaken baby syndrome.

At the time of the incident, Davis had been caring for Jamie while the child’s mother was at work.

Evidence showed that Jamie had also suffered a previous skull fracture while in the care of the defendant. An autopsy revealed healing vertebrae fractures and a healing rib fracture. These additional injuries demonstrated a pattern of chronic and systematic abuse, and the cause of death was determined to be acute and healing traumatic injuries to the head, neck, and torso. The death was ruled a homicide.

“The chronic and unrelenting abuse inflicted on this innocent, defenseless baby shocks the conscience and warrants the harshest penalty Georgia law allows,” said Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper. “Jamie experienced unimaginable suffering in his short life. He was robbed of the opportunity to grow, learn, and lead a full and happy life because of the evil actions of the defendant. Those actions come with consequences.”

During the sentencing hearing, Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper recommended the maximum sentence under Georgia law, arguing it is both appropriate and necessary.

A member of Jamie’s family provided a victim impact statement, remembering Jamie as joyful, playful, and loved.

“Jamie deserved to be loved. He deserved to be taken care of. He deserved to be in the care of someone who could do these things for him. Gregory Davis was entrusted to take care of Jamie and, instead, killed him. My family and I have no sympathy for this man and neither should the court,” the family member said.

At the close of the hearing, Chief Superior Court Judge David L. Cannon Jr. told the defendant, “You do not deserve to breathe free air.”

Judge Cannon then handed down the maximum sentence: life without parole, plus an additional 60 years.

“I am incredibly proud of the dedicated work by our prosecution team, law enforcement, first responders, and medical experts who fought tirelessly for justice,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “This verdict and sentence demonstrate the commitment of our community to combat child abuse and recognize the value of Jamie’s life.”

In connection with this case, the baby’s mother, Amber Lynn Ellis, 27, of Canton, was charged with two counts of cruelty to children in the second degree. On May 5, Ellis entered a non-negotiated guilty plea to those charges, and Judge Cannon sentenced her to 20 years, with the first 10 years to serve in prison and the remainder on probation.

The case was investigated by Cherokee Sheriff’s Office and prosecuted by Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper, with the assistance of Assistant District Attorney Leyna Pope, of the Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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