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PRESS RELEASE

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**Attorney General Brown Announces Charges Against Four
Individuals for Organized Retail Crime**
*Four Men Indicted for Participating in a Criminal Organization
Responsible for 37 Thefts Across Six Counties, Totaling
Approximately \$800,000 in Losses*

BALTIMORE, MD (November 25, 2024) – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced the indictments of four individuals for their roles in a criminal organization responsible for approximately \$800,000 in retail burglaries and thefts across at least six jurisdictions in Maryland. The investigation was led by the Gaithersburg and Montgomery County Police Departments.

“Organized retail crimes are not victimless. Stealing hundreds of thousands of dollars from businesses can lead to higher prices for products that Marylanders need, and cost hardworking employees their jobs,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “My office will continue to protect Maryland consumers and businesses from crimes like these that hurt our economy.”

The following four individuals engaged in a pattern of organized retail crimes:

- Donte Bernard Shaw, 34, of Washington D.C.
- Taquan Anthony Neal, 25, of District Heights, Maryland
- Antonio William Polite, 35, of Hyattsville, Maryland
- Samuel Cordell Whitmire, Jr., 29, of Alexandria, Virginia

All four defendants are charged with participation in a criminal organization, theft scheme totaling over \$100,000, conspiracy to commit theft and 2nd degree burglary, and multiple individual instances of theft and burglary. Mr. Shaw is also charged with illegal possession of a regulated firearm. As alleged in the indictment, Mr. Shaw, Mr. Neal, Mr. Whitmire, and Mr. Polite, along with other members of the organization, committed at least 37 organized retail crimes. Investigators first became aware of the group and its activities in September 2023.

The organization targeted stores across Maryland, including retail locations in Howard County, Baltimore County, Anne Arundel County, Montgomery County, Queen Anne’s County, and Prince George’s County. The retailers who were targeted by the criminal organization include:

- Sunglass Hut
- Ulta Beauty
- LensCrafters
- Perfumania
- GameStop
- Dick's Sporting Goods
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The organization typically committed thefts during business hours by overwhelming store employees with a rapid, "flash mob" style tactic. During a theft, multiple individuals would enter a store, fill their bags or arms with as much retail product as they could, and flee. On most occasions, the store was open; however, there were some instances in which the organization burglarized victim retail stores outside of business hours. The organization repeatedly targeted the same victim retail stores, sometimes stealing from them multiple times within a span of days.

Members of the organization targeted luxury retail items, including designer sunglasses, prescription glasses frames, perfumes, and name-brand clothing, and then sold the stolen items in person or by posting to online marketplaces.

"This case highlights the importance of collaboration in addressing organized retail crime, which not only impacts businesses but also threatens the safety of our communities," **said Chief Marc Yamada of the Montgomery County Police Department.** "I commend the dedicated efforts of our detectives, the Gaithersburg Police Department, and all our partner agencies who worked to dismantle this criminal organization."

"The diligence and commitment of detectives from the Gaithersburg Police Department and multiple allied agencies led to a successful resolution in this case," **said Chief Mark Sorka of the Gaithersburg Police Department.** "An investigation of this magnitude requires significant effort and collaboration, and we greatly appreciate the support and cooperation of all involved agencies."

The defendants' cases will be prosecuted in the Circuit Court for Howard County.

In making today's announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked the Criminal Division, Organized Crime Unit Chief Paul Halliday, and Assistant Attorneys General Surur Fatema Yonce and Salman Ameri, who are prosecuting the case. Attorney General Brown also thanked the Gaithersburg Police Department, the Montgomery County Police Department, the Howard County Police Department, the Baltimore County Police Department, the Queen Anne's County Police Department, Prince George's Police Department, and the Metropolitan Police Department.

Attorney General Brown also thanked State's Attorney for Howard County Richard Gibson, Jr., State's Attorney for Arundel County Anne Colt Leitess, State's Attorney for Baltimore County Scott Shellenberger, State's Attorney for Montgomery County John McCarthy, State's Attorney for Queen Anne's County Lance Richardson, and State's Attorney for Prince George's County Aisha Braveboy, for their offices' assistance with this investigation.

A criminal indictment is merely an accusation of wrongdoing, and a defendant is presumed innocent until the State proves the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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