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## Attorney General Ashley Moody News Release

### AG Moody Files Criminal Charges Against Organized Theft Ringleader Stealing Nearly Half a Million Dollars in Equipment from Home Depot



TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced criminal charges against the leader of an organized theft ring for stealing nearly half a million dollars in heavy equipment from Home Depot stores. Jereome Downing faces multiple felony charges for stealing heavy equipment, including stump grinders, trenchers, boom lifts, excavators and more. Downing claimed to be a wholesaler and sold the equipment on Facebook Marketplace at discounted prices. The scheme resulted in more than \$460,000 in losses to Home Depot and thousands of dollars in losses to civilians buying the equipment under false pretenses.

**Attorney General Ashley Moody** said, “This scheme not only resulted in major losses to Home Depot, but also losses for innocent civilians buying stolen rental equipment under false pretenses. Thanks to the many law enforcement partners in this case and our Statewide Prosecutors, this defendant’s final rent is now due, and he faces serious felony charges.”

According to the investigation, Downing sent straw purchasers into Home Depot with prepaid credit cards to rent a piece of heavy equipment, typically lasting between 24 and 48 hours. Downing then immediately listed the equipment for sale on Facebook Marketplace. The listings often contained photos of units belonging to Home Depot and offered for prices less than the

typical market value. To explain the discount, Downing claimed to be a wholesaler attempting to sell the items before taking them to auction. Downing also provided the civilian purchasers a Bill of Sale stating his name and address. During the investigation, the scheme resulted in the theft and sale of 21 different pieces of rental equipment, targeting multiple Home Depot stores. The scheme affected the following judicial circuits in Florida: 10th, 11th, 13th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th and 20th.

Downing faces the following charges: one count of organized scheme to defraud \$50,000 or more, one count of conspiracy to commit organized scheme to defraud \$50,000 or more, one count of fraudulent use of personal identification, and 21 counts of unlawful sublease of a motor vehicle.

The Miami-Dade Police Department and Port St. Lucie Police Department, along with the assistance of many local jurisdictions, investigated this case. Attorney General Moody's Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Christopher Olowin will prosecute the case.

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