

HARDING COUNSEL

A Professional Limited Liability Company

Elliott M. Harding, Esq., VSB No. 90442

(434) 962-8465

Elliott@HardingCounsel.com

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 11, 2026

Media Contact

Elliott M. Harding, Esq.

(434) 962-8465 | Elliott@HardingCounsel.com

Family of Dustin Griffin Calls for Transparency and Professionalism Following Premature Public Statements by Commonwealth's Attorney

Family Questions Timing of Official Conclusions While Investigations Remain Ongoing and Autopsy Incomplete

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA. Harding Counsel, PLLC, on behalf of the family of Dustin Griffin, issues the following statement in response to the January 7, 2026 press release from Commonwealth's Attorney Timothy Martin regarding the December 17, 2025 incident that resulted in Dustin's death.

On December 17, 2025, the Griffin family lost Dustin Griffin, a son, a brother, and a deeply loved member of their family. The family acknowledges that Dustin struggled with substance addiction, as many families have been touched by this crisis. However, Dustin was far more than his struggles. He was loved by many and will be remembered for his compassion, kindness, and the care he showed to those around him.

The family acknowledges and respects the difficult and dangerous work performed by law enforcement officers who serve and protect the community. They recognize that these roles often require split-second decisions under extremely stressful circumstances. The family extends sincere thoughts and

prayers to the injured deputy, the other officers involved, and their families during this difficult time.

Concerns Regarding the Commonwealth's Attorney's Statement

The family feels compelled to respond to the statement released by Commonwealth's Attorney Timothy Martin on January 7, 2026. The statement was premature and unprofessional for several reasons.

First, as of the same evening of the press release at approximately 6:15 p.m., a Virginia State Police investigator confirmed to the family that while certain information had been shared with the Commonwealth's Attorney, the investigation into this incident remained ongoing.

Second, as of that same date, the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner had not yet completed or released its official report and disclosed that it could be up to twelve more weeks before completion. Despite this, the public statement presented conclusions and characterizations that suggest a level of certainty not supported by a completed investigation.

Third, the statement did not fully reflect all available factual information. Based on the family's viewing of Dustin's body and findings from a private autopsy, they know that he was shot more than two times, a fact that was not acknowledged or addressed in the Commonwealth's Attorney's statement.

Failure to Notify the Family

Most painful for the family is that they were never formally notified of Dustin's death before public statements were issued. Learning critical details through public channels, rather than through direct, compassionate communication, has intensified their grief and fell short of the most basic level of common decency.

This was further compounded by the fact that the Commonwealth's Attorney spent an hour on the phone with a reporter from the Augusta Free Press, during which unreleased details were discussed and the reporter was offered

an opportunity to view the body-worn camera footage. This footage has not been made available to the family despite a formal request. In matters involving the loss of life, the family of the deceased should be the first to receive verified information before it is released to the public.

Questions Regarding Procedural Decisions

Dustin was on probation for prior drug-related offenses, and deputies served a search warrant in October of last year. However, he was not taken into custody at that time, nor was his probation revoked. He was repeatedly pressured to act as an informant. He later appeared voluntarily at the Sheriff's Office on December 4, 2025, and was again not taken into custody. Additionally, he had a scheduled court appearance for a vehicle registration summons on December 22, just five days after he was killed.

Given these circumstances, the family respectfully questions why, despite multiple opportunities for Dustin to be taken into custody while he was present voluntarily and in a controlled setting, he was instead later confronted in a different environment. These are the kinds of procedural questions the family believes deserve careful review as part of the ongoing investigation.

The Family's Request

The family is not seeking to inflame tensions or assign blame prematurely. They are seeking transparency, accuracy, and basic human dignity. The family believes that all conclusions should wait until all investigations are complete and all facts are verified. They ask only for fairness, professionalism, and respect as they continue to mourn and seek clarity about what happened.

“We are not asking for special treatment. We are asking for the same consideration any family would expect when they lose a loved one under these circumstances. We want answers, but we want those answers to be based on completed investigations and verified facts, not premature conclusions released to the media before the family has even been properly informed.”

The Family of Dustin Griffin

Harding Counsel, PLLC will continue to monitor this matter on behalf of the Griffin family and will provide additional updates as warranted by developments in the investigation.

###

About Harding Counsel, PLLC

Harding Counsel, PLLC is a Charlottesville-based law firm specializing in civil rights litigation, criminal defense, and constitutional law. Founded by Elliott M. Harding, Esq., the firm is committed to zealous advocacy and the protection of fundamental rights. The firm has extensive experience in federal appellate courts, including the Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals and the United States Supreme Court.