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David W. Slayton, Executive Officer/Clerk of Court

7 **SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**
8 **FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

9 PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA,
10 Plaintiff,
11 v.
12 DAVID ANTHONY BURKE,
13 Defendant.

Case No. 26CJCF02399

**PEOPLE'S BRIEF REGARDING
PRELIMINARY HEARING EVIDENCE**

Date: April 29, 2026
Time: 01:30 PM
Court: Department 105

14 TO: THE HONORABLE JUDGE CHARLAINE OLMEDO OF THE ABOVE-
15 ENTITLED COURT, AND TO DEFENDANT AND HIS COUNSEL OF RECORD:

16 The People submit the following brief to provide a roadmap for the evidence the People
17 intend to introduce at the preliminary hearing scheduled to begin May 1, 2026.
18

19 **I. BACKGROUND FACTS**

20 The dismembered body of 14-year-old Celeste R. (victim) was discovered in the front
21 trunk of defendant's Tesla Model X on September 8, 2025. The vehicle had been towed three
22 days prior from 1405 Bluebird Avenue, which was parked approximately 400 feet from
23 defendant's home at 1368 Doheny Place in the Hollywood Hills. Surveillance video and other
24 evidence confirm defendant was the last person to drive the vehicle on July 29, 2025, before he
25 left Los Angeles on a concert tour.
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1 On September 8, 2025, the manager of the tow yard where the Tesla had been impounded
2 noted the strong smell of decay and the presence of flies coming from the vehicle. He notified
3 Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) Hollywood Auto Detectives, who determined the Tesla
4 was registered to defendant through departmental resources. At the tow yard, LAPD detectives
5 opened the Tesla's front storage compartment and observed a black cadaver bag covered in
6 insects. Inside the bag, they discovered a severely decomposed head and torso. A plastic garbage
7 bag beneath the black cadaver bag contained the dismembered arms and legs. However, the
8 victim's ring and pinky fingers on her left hand had been amputated and were not found in the
9 Tesla. On September 16, 2025, the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner's Department
10 positively identified the body from dental records as belonging to the victim.
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12 Pursuant to their investigation, LAPD Robbery Homicide Detectives determined the
13 victim and defendant met in January 2022 when she was 11 years old. They began a sexual
14 relationship in November 2023 when the victim was just 13 years old and defendant was 18.
15 Detectives learned the victim had been reported missing to the Riverside County Sheriff's
16 Department (RCSD) by her family, who live in Lake Elsinore, in February and April 2024.
17 RCSD telephonically contacted defendant on February 17, 2024, after they identified a phone
18 number in the victim's phone records that belonged to him. During the call, defendant claimed
19 he had spoken to the victim last on February 13 or 14, 2024, but stated he was unaware she was a
20 minor or that she had been reported missing. RCSD advised him that Los Angeles Sheriff's
21 Department (LASD) deputies would be coming to his home. On that day, defendant was living at
22 804 N. Doheny Place in West Hollywood. RCSD requested that LASD conduct a welfare check
23 at defendant's home. LASD Deputies went to defendant's home that night at 8:15 p.m. and
24 informed him the victim was a 13-year-old runaway. Defendant again claimed he was unaware
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1 she was a minor and he had only met the victim once in person in November 2023. However,
2 defendant showed deputies a yearbook photo of the victim he had on his cellphone. Although he
3 claimed to be unaware of where the victim was at the time, she returned home two days later.
4

5 Despite being informed by law enforcement the victim was only 13, defendant continued
6 to pursue her. After the victim returned home in February 2024, her parents took her cell phone
7 away. Defendant drove to Lake Elsinore and paid a junior high school student in the victim's
8 class \$1,000 to give the victim a cell phone defendant purchased so they could stay in contact.
9 Throughout 2024, the victim spent a significant amount of time with defendant, including
10 summer weekends at his home in the Hollywood Hills and traveling with him to Las Vegas,
11 London, and Texas to meet his family.
12

13 Text exchanges between the victim and defendant contain references to sex, pregnancy,
14 abortion, and use of the Plan B emergency contraceptive. There are also explicit photographs
15 documenting and corroborating their sexual relationship. In November 2024, defendant and the
16 victim broke up, although they continued to communicate, and text messages suggest they also
17 continued to have sexual relations.
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19 April 23, 2025 is the likely date of the victim's death and when all her cellular activity
20 ceased. The night prior, April 22, 2025, defendant and the victim engaged in a lengthy argument
21 described in detail in their text messages. The messages reveal the victim's jealousy over
22 defendant's relationships with other women, as defendant led her to believe they had a future
23 together. She became extremely upset and threatened to disclose damaging information about her
24 relationship with defendant to end his career and destroy his life. Defendant's first studio album
25 was due to be released on April 25, 2025. He had an emerging multi-million-dollar career
26 already in progress. He also had multiple product endorsements which were highly profitable.
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1 At approximately 8:40 p.m. on April 23, 2025, defendant sent an Uber to transport the
2 victim from her Lake Elsinore home to his residence. They communicated before and during her
3 Uber ride, which dropped her off at defendant's Hollywood Hills home around 10:10 p.m. At
4 approximately 10:30 p.m., defendant sent text messages to the victim inquiring where she was.
5
6 The People contend this was part of defendant's premeditated plan to cover up the murder, as she
7 was already dead by this time.

8 Knowing he had to silence the victim before she ruined his music career as she had
9 threatened, very soon after her arrival at his home, defendant stabbed the victim to death multiple
10 times and stood by while she bled out. At no time did he call law enforcement or 911 or take her
11 to an emergency room to attempt to save her life.
12

13 Despite knowing she was dead and her family was trying to find her, the evidence will
14 show defendant lied and claimed he didn't know where she was. In fact, defendant drove to
15 Santa Barbara County immediately after the victim died, attempting to dispose of her property
16 and destroy evidence. At approximately 11:30 p.m. on April 23, 2025, he drove away from his
17 home as he texted and called the victim's phone, asking where she was. Again, these were acts
18 calculated and planned to set up his defense within a very short timeline after the victim's
19 vicious murder. Defendant drove his Tesla north on the 101 freeway to San Marcos Pass Road,
20 SR-154, near Lake Cachuma in Santa Barbara County. He returned home early the following
21 morning on April 24, 2025, before going to a radio interview for the release of his album that
22 week. He sent two additional texts to the victim's phone that day which obviously went
23 unanswered because she was already dead. After April 26, 2025, defendant never attempted to
24 contact her again.
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1 Tellingly, defendant subsequently purchased tools to carry out his plot to dismember and
2 dispose of the victim's body. On April 24, 2025, defendant ordered a shovel from Home Depot
3 that was delivered to his home from Postmates. On May 1, 2025, defendant ordered, and
4 subsequently Amazon delivered, two chainsaws to his home. On May 5, 2025, defendant
5 ordered, and Amazon subsequently delivered, a body bag, heavy-duty laundry bags, and a blue
6 inflatable pool to his home. He made these purchases under the fake name Victoria Mendez. On
7 May 8, 2025, defendant returned to the same area in Santa Barbara County, leaving his home
8 around 11:30 p.m. He returned to the area again on May 31, 2025. This is an isolated site off
9 SR-154 where the victim's identification was subsequently discovered in January 2026.
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12 Additionally, on July 7, 2025, defendant ordered, and subsequently Amazon delivered, a "burn
13 cage" to his home under the same fake name as part of his plan to incinerate evidence.

14 Moreover, defendant took horrifying measures to destroy and discard the victim's body.
15 After placing her body into the blue inflatable pool to prevent her blood from spilling onto his
16 garage floor, defendant used a chainsaw and perhaps other tools to cut off her limbs. Small blue
17 plastic fragments were found embedded in the victim's remains, which were collected by the Los
18 Angeles County Medical Examiner's Department. The fragments were analyzed by the LAPD's
19 Forensic Science Division, Trace Analysis Unit. An expert was able to make a physical fit match
20 from the blue fragments to the blue inflatable pool purchased by defendant in May 2025. In order
21 to distance himself from the victim, he amputated her left ring and pinky fingers because her ring
22 finger contained a tattoo of his name. Her fingers have not been recovered. Defendant then
23 placed her head and torso into the cadaver bag he purchased. He placed her limbs into a garbage
24 bag, which he deposited into his front trunk, laying the cadaver bag on top. For several weeks, or
25 possibly months, defendant left the victim's body to decompose inside his Tesla. He lied to
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1 friends, business associates, and others who noticed the strong smell of decay in and around his
2 home and vehicle. Before leaving on his concert tour at the end of July, he parked his Tesla on
3 the street around the corner from his home.

4
5 LAPD served a search warrant at defendant's home at 1368 Doheny Pl. on September 17,
6 2025, after the victim was identified by the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner on
7 September 16, 2025. Inside the garage, detectives discovered evidence consistent with the
8 dismemberment of the victim's body in the inflatable pool, which contained multiple linear cuts.
9 Several biological samples, which tested positive for blood, were collected within the garage
10 area. DNA analysis determined that various samples matched the victim's unique genetic profile.

11
12 On December 9, 2025, the Medical Examiner ruled the victim's death a homicide caused
13 by two penetrating injuries to the torso.

14 On January 17, 2025, the victim's U.S. Passport Card was found by a Caltrans worker off
15 SR-154 in Santa Barbara County.

16 17 **II. EVIDENCE**

18 The People will present the following evidence at the preliminary hearing, including, but not
19 limited to:

- 20 • The description of photographs depicting the victim naked, as well as while she was
21 engaged with defendant in sexual activity when she was 13. As this evidence constitutes
22 Child Sexual Abuse Material (CSAM), the photographs themselves will not be presented.
23 While all possible charges that could be proven were not filed, the CSAM is proof of
24 their ongoing sexual relationship while the victim was 13 and 14 years old.
- 25 • Numerous text messages between defendant and the victim evidencing their sexual
26 relationship, pregnancy, abortion, and use of Plan B emergency contraception. Messages
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1 through March 2025 prove defendant continued to manipulate the victim, as she
2 messaged, “all we do is have sex and just hang out man I want more than that for
3 myself.” These messages were obtained from defendant’s iCloud data.
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- 5 • Defendant’s cellular activity and communications derived from defendant’s iPhone and
6 Tesla, which demonstrate defendant’s activities from April 22, 2025 – April 24, 2025,
7 including a trip to Santa Barbara County in the middle of the night after the victim
8 arrived at his Hollywood Hills home.
- 9 • Surveillance video of defendant driving his Tesla on July 29, 2025, for the last time
10 before parking the vehicle and leaving on tour at the end of July.
- 11 • DNA evidence developed from blood stains collected from defendant’s garage, which
12 match the victim’s genetic profile.
- 13 • Proof of defendant’s Amazon purchases and deliveries to his residence, including: two
14 chainsaws, a body bag, an inflatable pool, heavy duty laundry bags, and a “burn cage”
15 after April 24, 2025.
- 16 • Proof of defendant’s purchase and delivery from Postmates of a shovel from Home Depot
17 to his home on April 24, 2025.
- 18 • Uber records showing defendant’s transaction where he ordered an Uber to pick up the
19 victim from her Lake Elsinore home and transport her to his residence the night of April
20 23, 2025.
- 21 • Proof of defendant’s lucrative career as a singer and songwriter prior to April 23, 2025.
22 Defendant had an album release party on the night of April 24, 2025, before embarking
23 on an international tour in late July 2025.
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- 1 • Text message exchanges between defendant and the victim on April 22 and April 23,
2 2025, where the victim threatened to expose defendant and destroy his career.
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5 **III. CONCLUSION**

6 This brief is filed to assist the Court in understanding the scope and relevance of evidence
7 the prosecution intends to present at the preliminary hearing. The prosecution has issued
8 numerous subpoenas and is prepared to proceed with the preliminary hearing. The defense has
9 had multiple opportunities to request a continuance but has not done so. Furthermore, California
10 Penal Code §1050 **requires** the defense to provide at least two court days' notice to request a
11 continuance. In view of the limited scope of evidence to be presented at the preliminary hearing
12 detailed in this brief, there should be no substantial impediment to moving forward with the
13 hearing as scheduled.
14

15
16 Dated this 29th day of April, 2026

17 Respectfully submitted,

18 NATHAN HOCHMAN
19 District Attorney of Los Angeles County

20 By: 
21 NATHAN HOCHMAN
22 DISTRICT ATTORNEY and

23 By: 
24 Beth Silverman
25 Deputy District Attorney

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10 SUPERIOR COURT OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
11 FOR THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES


12 PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA)	Case No. 26CJCF02399
)	
13 Plaintiff,)	PROOF OF SERVICE
14 v.)	
)	
15 DAVID ANTHONY BURKE,)	
)	
16 Defendant.)	

17 TO THE HONORABLE JUDGE CHARLAINE OLMEDO, DEPARTMENT 105,
18 CENTRAL JUDICIAL DISTRICT, AND TO DEFENSE COUNSEL:

19 The undersigned declares under the penalty of perjury that the following is true and correct:
20 I am over eighteen years of age and I am employed by the Office of the District Attorney of Los
21 Angeles County with offices at 211 W. Temple Street, 11th Floor, Los Angeles, California 90012. On
22 the date of execution below, I will send the attached document, **PEOPLE'S BRIEF REGARDING**
23 **PRELIMINARY HEARING EVIDENCE**, by electronic mail to appointed counsel:

24 Regina Peter: rpeter@berkbrettler.com
25 Blair Berk: bberk@berkbrettler.com
26 Marilyn Bednarski: mbednarski@mbllegal.com

27 Executed on April 29, 2026, at Los Angeles, California.

28 
BETH SILVERMAN
Deputy District Attorney
Major Crimes Division