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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Statement from Sheriff Labat following March 4, 2026
Fulton County Board of Commissioners Meeting:**

I welcome anyone who brings forward ideas to help reduce the population at the Fulton County Jail. This has been a top priority for me and my team since taking office on January 1, 2021. The reality is that procedures have already been implemented to address this issue, including the creation of an Inmate Advocacy Unit that reviews thousands of cases to identify individuals eligible for release or transfer. We have also worked consistently with our justice partners toward the shared goal of safely reducing the jail population. In addition, we have entered into agreements with other counties to house residents outside of Fulton County to help alleviate overcrowding.

Today the Chairman outlined a proposed five-point plan to reduce the jail population, greater collaboration or simply a conversation in advance would have been more beneficial. Had the Chairman or the county manager's team reached out, it would have been clear that three of the five proposed measures are successfully in place and helping to reduce jail population.

Unfortunately, this is not the first time significant proposals regarding the Fulton County Jail have been publicly suggested without prior coordination with those directly responsible for operating the facility. What is also consistent is the repeated denial of funding brought to the Board to increase safety for our residents and our team. Real meaningful progress requires collaboration and communication.

Furthermore, any Fulton County Commissioner who believes that the Fulton County Sheriff's Office budget for FY2026 is \$234 million has been asleep at the wheel of the budget process for the past several months. This assertion is intentionally misleading and inaccurately represents both the scope of our operations and the realities of county funding. Fulton County residents deserve transparency and not political spin when it comes to how their tax dollars are prioritized.

To be clear: the Sheriff's Office operating budget approved by the County is approximately \$156.6 million, reflecting a 1% reduction from our proposed budget, despite ongoing and good-faith discussions with County leadership about preserving essential public safety resources. The vast majority of this budget is dedicated to personnel expenses and legally mandated services, leaving little flexibility to address growing and emerging public safety needs. See attached breakdown of ACTUAL budget (Attachment A).

It is also important to clarify that funding related to the Federal Consent Decree is a countywide obligation, not discretionary funding allocated to the Sheriff's Office. Conflating these figures creates confusion and distracts from an honest discussion about the County's fiscal decisions.

I do agree with the Chairman on one point: this is not rocket science. A closer look beyond the headlines reveals that this issue is fundamentally about transparency, accuracy, and the respect Fulton County taxpayers deserve when decisions of this magnitude are discussed publicly.