



McEldrew Young Purtell Merritt

April 15, 2021

STATEMENT REGARDING THE FATAL SHOOTING OF STEPHEN HUGHES

Today we were disappointed to learn that the Berks County District Attorney declined to file criminal charges against the Muhlenberg Township Police Officer who shot and killed Stephen Hughes on March 15, 2021.

On that date, multiple officers responded to Mr. Hughes' house because he was in need of mental health care. Instead of providing that care, they entered his home without his permission, forced their way into his locked bedroom, and shot him in the chest.

The officers apparently contend that they forced their way into Mr. Hughes' bedroom because they were concerned that he was going to harm himself. This is belied by the officers' admission that Mr. Hughes never threatened to harm himself and just wanted to be left alone. It is also belied by their admission that at least one officer had his firearm drawn and in a ready position before forcing the bedroom door open. To be clear, this tragic loss of life was caused by a series of decisions that defy the principles of competent policing and common sense.

We will continue to seek transparency and accountability, and we call on Muhlenberg Township to release all materials related to this investigation to Mr. Hughes' family as soon as they receive it.