FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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MALPRACTICE LAWSUIT FILED AGAINST COURT-APPOINTED ATTORNEY JEROME GODINICH

HOUSTON, TX – The Texas Fair Defense Project (TFDP) has filed a malpractice lawsuit against Harris County attorney Jerome Godinich on behalf of his former client, Michael Carter. Mr. Carter was held in jail for more than three years for a case that was ultimately dismissed. During that time, Mr. Carter lost his ability to work, his credit, his truck, and his wife of over 40 years, whose funeral he was unable to attend.

Over the course of more than three years, Mr. Godinich never visited Mr. Carter in jail, never filed a substantive motion, and never responded to Mr. Carter’s requests for information about his case. Mr. Godinich violated prevailing practice standards, professional ethics, and the law. His poor representation harmed Mr. Carter, who was left in jail through the height of the COVID-19 pandemic with no information about his case or whether he would ever be released.

"I just don’t want anybody to go through what I’ve been through," said Mr. Carter. “To sit there every day in jail for years and never hear from your lawyer? Nobody deserves that.”

Mr. Carter is not alone. Mr. Godinich represents hundreds of persons in felony cases each year, billing Harris County upward of $500,000 annually. Although Harris County has a public defender’s office, private attorneys like Mr. Godinich still represent most persons accused of a felony in Harris County.

“Mr. Carter sat in jail for years without receiving even basic representation from his attorney, and Harris County taxpayers still wrote him a check,” said TFDP Executive Director Geoff Burkhart. “Last year, Harris County paid attorneys over $30 million for felony representation, yet—with the exception of the public defender’s office, which handles just a fraction of the cases—there is little attorney oversight. Harris County needs a robust, independent public defense system.”

About Texas Fair Defense Project
The Texas Fair Defense Project fights to end the criminalization of poverty in Texas. We envision a system of justice that upholds the dignity and civil rights of all people, regardless of income, race, or gender.