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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

Attorney General James Uthmeier Announces Arrests of Illegal Aliens in Organized Retail Theft Scheme

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General James Uthmeier announced the arrests of Willy Jesus Diaz Pelayo and Maikol Eduardo Garcia Sanchez, Venezuelan nationals involved in a nationwide retail theft scheme targeting Ulta Beauty stores.

“Bringing together local law enforcement and our Statewide Prosecutors is why we launched the Retail Theft Special Task Force,” **said Attorney General James Uthmeier.** “Retail theft is not a victimless crime; every consumer feels the effects when retailers are forced to raise their prices. We will push for the toughest penalties possible on these criminals to protect businesses and consumers.”

This investigation was a joint effort between the Palm Beach Gardens Police Department, the Attorney General's Office of Statewide Prosecution, and Florida's Retail Theft Investigative Special Task Force.

Investigators found that from January 1 to November 28, 2025, Pelayo and Sanchez committed over 40 thefts at Ulta Beauty stores across Florida, from Jacksonville to Miami. They posed as customers, hid expensive perfumes and colognes in their pants, and left without paying. Pelayo and Sanchez are tied to a series of Ulta Beauty thefts nationwide, totaling \$166,000 in losses, with \$47,000 lost in Florida.

The pair, both Venezuelan nationals with ICE detainers, face felony charges: Pelayo with one count and Sanchez with two counts of second-degree Organized Retail Theft.

This case will be prosecuted by Senior Assistant Statewide Prosecutor Chris Olowin. Pelayo and Sanchez face up to 15 and 30 years in the Department of Corrections, respectively. Both will be deported upon completion of their sentences.

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