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**Contact** Kylie Mason

**Phone** 850-245-0150

OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL STATE OF FLORIDA

# Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

## AG Moody's Priority Legislation Combating ORT Signed by Governor

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody is thanking Gov. Ron DeSantis for signing priority legislation to help Florida prosecutors dismantle organized retail theft rings. During the 2022 Florida Legislative Session, Attorney General Moody worked with lawmakers to pass Senate Bill 1534 to provide more tools to prosecute members of organized retail theft rings. Prior to the start of session, retail theft escalated dramatically in large cities outside of Florida—with major incidents occurring during the holiday shopping season in locations like Los Angeles and San Francisco.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “We continue to be proactive in making sure organized retail theft rings do not have a free pass to pillage retailers in Florida. While prosecutors in other states may turn a blind eye to these massive retail crimes, in Florida we enforce the law to protect our citizens and visitors. This new law will help us continue this important work and enhance public safety. I want to thank Gov. DeSantis and state lawmakers who fought for this important legislation to help us build a Stronger, Safer Florida.”

Senator Jim Boyd said, “Law Enforcement and our State Prosecutors asked for tools to address the growing crime of organized retail theft, also known as ‘smash and grab.’ I believe Senate Bill 1534 delivers those tools. I applaud General Moody for coming out strong on felony retail theft. There must be consequences.”

Representative Chuck Clemons said, “The passage of this critical legislation sends out the strongest of messages that our state is not going to tolerate our communities’ retail establishments being terrorized. We are prepared to give law enforcement and prosecutors all the tools they need to keep this brand of crime out of Florida and let it be known, they will use them.”

Florida Retail Federation President and CEO Scott Shalley said, “Under the leadership of Attorney General Moody, Florida continues to lead the nation in the fight against organized retail crime. We thank Governor DeSantis and the Legislature for supporting and protecting Florida retailers.”

The new law, that takes effect Oct. 1, creates second-degree and third-degree felony retail theft crimes based on multiple retail thefts occurring in a limited time period in different merchant locations. Under the new law, someone who steals 20 or more items, through five or more separate thefts within a certain period, can be charged with a second-degree felony.

A person who steals 10 or more items, through at least five thefts within a certain period, can be charged with a third-degree felony.

The offense severity level ranking chart of the Criminal Punishment Code will rank felony retail theft offenses as either level five or six, depending on severity.

In December 2021, Attorney General Moody launched the Florida Organized Retail Crime Exchange—a statewide task force and database to help spot trends, identify suspects and take down massive, organized retail theft rings. It also bridges the gap between law enforcement, prosecutors and retailers to work together and share information on theft incidents statewide.

For more information on FORCE, click here.