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**Representative Hart Responds to New Developments in the Case of Timothy Thomas in the Wake of his Exhumation**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – On Easter Sunday of 2018 Florida Department of Corrections inmate Timothy Thomas was found deceased in his cell after an altercation with officers. It has been reported that on Easter morning in 2018 Thomas was wearing a religious head garb and as a result was pulled out of the breakfast line. It has been concluded that he was beaten by several officers and was sprayed or “gassed.” While in a cell another inmate witnessed him trying to catch his breath until he later died.

The Florida Department of Corrections originally said that Thomas was stabbed and beaten by another inmate however, medical records and autopsies have proven that to not be true. His family has now exhumed his body to get a second autopsy as the first was inconclusive.

**Representative Dianne Hart (D-Tampa)** issued the following statement.

“I have been following this case since I was elected to the Legislature. It is unfortunate that families have to go through years long processes to get answers in the death of their children. The Department of Corrections touts a mission of ‘meeting the needs of those entrusted to our care, creating a safe and professional environment.’ This cannot continue to be the mission statement if cases like this are the outcome.

“Questions must be asked of our correctional system. If not for any other reason, but that families without means would never know the truth otherwise. As sad as it is Timothy Thomas is just one case of hundreds. There are hundreds of individuals who have been brutalized and killed at the hands of this state agency. There are countless lawsuits being filed seeking resolve for many cases just like this one. How many lawsuits must be filed before the legislature acts? If we continue to do nothing, their blood will be a stain on our hands.”

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