

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 27, 2025

The Estate of Michael John Burch v. Huerfano County et al.

Denver, Colorado, March 27, 2025—RATHOD | MOHAMEDBHAI LLC and The Law Offices of Adam J. Schultz have filed a lawsuit on behalf of the Estate of Michael John Burch against Huerfano County’s Board of Commissioners, Sheriff’s Office, and Hospital District. In addition to the Huerfano County entities, Defendants include Health Care Partners Foundation, Inc. and nine individuals: Sheriff Bruce Newman, Detention Officer Stuart Pino, Captain Lea Vigil, Captain Billy Laporte, Paramedic Sam Trujillo, Paramedic Gabriel Martinez, Certified Nurse Aid Shanene Sanders, Registered Nurse Rachael Simpson, and Nurse Practitioner Jennifer Green.

Between March 28 and April 4, 2023, Defendants tortured and killed 69-year-old Michael John Burch, a pre-trial detainee housed at the Huerfano County Detention Center. A retired correctional officer himself, Mr. Burch had been taken into the jail with no injuries on March 25, 2023. Ten days later, he was taken out in a body bag.

When Mr. Burch was taken into custody on March 25, 2023, he was in the midst of a mental health crisis but was otherwise in good physical health. Three days later, on March 28, 2023, Detention Officer Stuart Pino pummeled Mr. Burch into a metal bench for holding a pencil. Officer Pino broke six of Mr. Burch’s ribs, puncturing several organs, and causing massive internal bleeding. Officer Pino’s supervisor on scene, Captain Lea Vigil, mocked Mr. Burch’s pain and told him that he was “going straight to hell.” Captain Vigil later admitted that the circumstances did not require any force, let alone brutal violence.

Mr. Burch pleaded with Defendants: “My ribs are crushed . . . all the ribs are into my body.” When asked if he needed to go to the hospital, Mr. Burch stated, “Oh yeah, man, I want to go.” But instead, Defendants locked him in a cell. Captain Billy Laporte covered that cell window with black plastic so Defendants would be spared the inconvenience of watching Mr. Burch suffer.

In the days that followed, Defendants eventually removed that black plastic from the window of Mr. Burch’s cell. Defendants described Mr. Burch as “a different person” who suddenly struggled to walk, made additional explicit statements regarding his injuries and pain, and continued to plead for medical care, among other signs indicative of the ongoing, urgent need for medical attention. A visual examination—let alone an x-ray—would have revealed obvious signs of Mr. Burch’s fractured ribs, including the blood hemorrhaging into his body that had quickly manifested into a deep black bruise spanning the entirety of his lower torso.



Nevertheless, Defendants persisted in providing Mr. Burch with no medical care whatsoever. As his pleas for medical attention went unanswered, Mr. Burch realized that he would die alone in his cell.

On the evening of April 3, 2023, Mr. Burch created a deathbed for himself in the middle of the concrete floor of his cell, by taking his jail-issued mattress and pulling the sheets over himself. He was pronounced dead in the early morning hours of April 4, 2023.

Between March 28 and April 4, 2023, Defendants both caused and failed to treat Mr. Burch's life-ending injuries as he endured approximately 160 hours of unfathomable pain. The simple act of breathing became so painful as his shattered ribs pierced and tore his organs that his body stopped using his right lung, which shrank to half the normal size. Mr. Burch's body chose to reduce the pain of breathing by opting to slowly suffocate over seven days.

This lawsuit seeks accountability and justice for Mr. Burch. The Estate of Michael John Burch will be holding a press conference on **Thursday, March 27, 2025, at 10:30 a.m.** at the offices of RATHOD | MOHAMEDBHAI LLC, located at 2701 Lawrence Street, Denver, Colorado 80205.

The press conference will also be streamed live at the following link:
<https://www.facebook.com/rmlawyers>.

More information about the case can be found here: <https://rmlawyers.com/michael-burch/>
Please direct questions to the law firm of RATHOD | MOHAMEDBHAI LLC.

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Media Contacts:

Omeed Azmoudeh, oa@rmlawyers.com
Felipe Bohnet-Gomez, fbg@rmlawyers.com
Qusair Mohamedbhai, qm@rmlawyers.com
RATHOD | MOHAMEDBHAI LLC
Phone: 303-578-4400