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## IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 11, 2020

### SUIT ALLEGES CLARK COUNTY JAIL FAILED TO FEED MAN WHILE HE WAS DETAINED

**Vancouver, WA** – A man with Celiac Disease who was held in Clark County jail without safe access to food filed suit today against Clark County, Clark County Jail, and NaphCare, Inc. in federal court. The suit alleges that the County Jail denied Gaven Picciano’s repeated requests for gluten-free food that was safe for him to eat with the result that he lost more than 10 percent of his bodyweight in just three weeks. The suit includes claims of disability discrimination, constitutional violations, and state law claims.

In January 2020, Gaven Picciano was experiencing depression and police were called over concern that he was suicidal. He was booked and held at the Clark County Jail for approximately 22 days. Mr. Picciano has Celiac Disease which is an autoimmune disease that requires a strict gluten-free diet. Although Mr. Picciano notified jail officials that he has Celiac Disease, requested a gluten-free diet and signed off on release of his medical records to prove it, the jail initially refused to provide a safe diet, instead telling Mr. Picciano to trade his meals to other people in detention for bananas. Mr. Picciano became extremely ill and malnourished to the point that he lost consciousness and was not responding to painful stimuli by emergency responders. Even after Mr. Picciano was finally approved for a gluten-free diet, he was nevertheless served food containing gluten further exacerbating his symptoms.

Mr. Picciano continues to suffer impact from his treatment, although he has been released.

Stein & Vargas, LLP and the Washington Civil & Disability Advocate represent Mr. Picciano. “Defendants treated Mr. Picciano in a way that no civilized society should accept.” said Mary Vargas of Stein & Vargas, LLP. “For a jail to have a policy that by design means people with medical diagnoses requiring special diets do not eat for days or weeks is both unacceptable and unlawful,” she added.

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*Stein & Vargas, LLP is a civil rights firm based in Washington, D.C. and committed to the principle that all people have full and equal access to all parts of society.*

*Washington Civil & Disability Advocate is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit disability rights law firm based in Seattle, Washington and is committed to advocating for civil rights with an emphasis on advancing the rights of persons with disabilities and ensuring accessibility for all.*

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