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## **State Attorney Bain Launches Juvenile Literacy Program, First Students Graduate**

**ORANGE COUNTY, Fla.** – Earlier this year, State Attorney Andrew Bain launched Turning Pages, a juvenile literacy pilot program to identify and address literacy issues among at-risk youth in Orange and Osceola counties. The first group of five students completed the 12-week intensive program in April.

State Attorney Bain created Turning Pages in partnership with the University of Central Florida's Communication Disorders Clinic and Carrie Loughran, UCF clinical instructor and creator and director of the iRead Program. Through collaboration with the non-profit organization AMIkids, which works with juvenile offenders, youth are identified and given an opportunity to participate in the literacy program. Using research-based methods, UCF graduate student clinicians teach youth reading, writing, spelling and comprehension skills.

State Attorney Bain promised to work with community partners to prevent and deter crime when he came into office and prioritized juvenile literacy early on because of the widespread research showing the correlation between low literacy skills and incarceration rates.

The Literacy Project Foundation found three out of five people in U.S. prisons cannot read and 85% of all juveniles who interface with the juvenile system are functionally illiterate.

"This is an opportunity to work with youth in the juvenile justice system to try and end the school-to-prison pipeline we know exists," said State Attorney Bain. "Investing in the literacy and education of our youth is a proactive step towards reducing recidivism and creating a brighter future for our community. It is incumbent on our office to be involved in early and ongoing intervention to help break the cycle of crime and incarceration."

Statistics show only 25% of Florida third graders are reading proficiently by the end of the school year. Research shows that if third graders are not reading proficiently by the end of the school year, they are four times more likely to drop out of high school.

"Oral and written language can hugely impact a person's social, emotional and academic development," said Loughran. "If you do not have those foundational skills crucial for reading and writing development you can get lost very quickly. Many children start to feel hopeless and defeated and that increases the likelihood of them finding themselves in trouble for a lot of

reasons, including their academic and personal trauma. The treatment provided through Turning Pages is a great first step, and along with other services, has the potential to transform these children's lives."

State Attorney Bain hopes to offer the Turning Pages program to more youth in the juvenile justice system later this year.

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