

# Man in deadly Muse shooting pleads guilty

**By JUSTIN STORY**  
*The Daily News*

The man accused of firing the fatal shot during a struggle over a gun during a 2023 altercation at The Muse apartment complex pleaded guilty Monday, avoiding a trial that was scheduled to begin next month.

Malik Jones, 32, entered a guilty plea in Warren Circuit Court to charges of second-degree manslaughter and tampering with physical evidence, admitting to the charges that stemmed from the death of Ayanna Morgan, 21, who was shot July 23, 2023, in the parking lot of the Morgantown Road complex.

Jones had originally

been charged with murder, and faced a maximum punishment of 50 years or life in prison if he was convicted as charged.

His attorney, Jill Elkind of the Department of Public Advocacy, said that Jones' testimony at a September trial for possession of a handgun by a convicted felon provided the basis for his pleading guilty to the second-degree manslaughter and evidence tampering charges.

At that trial, Jones testified that he and Morgan engaged in a physical struggle over Morgan's handgun after she walked downstairs from her apartment to

confront Jones and the people with him following a verbal exchange.

Jones told a jury in September that he wrested the gun from Morgan and struck her with it, during which it discharged, leading to her death.

"I was afraid with the way we was tussling over the gun, anybody could've gotten shot," Jones said at his September trial, at which he was found not guilty of possessing a handgun while a convicted felon.

Jones also acknowledged



Malik Jones

throwing the gun out of the window of the vehicle in which he was a passenger after leaving the apartment complex.

In court on Monday, Jones answered a series of questions from Warren Circuit Judge John Grise in which he said he had all the time he needed to discuss his case with his defense team and was pleading guilty willingly.

As part of the plea agreement he reached with prosecutors, Jones also pleaded guilty to a count of first-degree fleeing or evading police, a charge that stemmed from an unrelated drug investigation.

Prosecutors will recommend a 15-year sen-

tence for Jones, who would serve that amount concurrently with a 10-year sentence for a previous conviction for first-degree bail jumping.

Mailk Jones will be sentenced on Jan. 27 for the crimes stemming from the shooting, and Feb. 2 for the fleeing/evading charge.

Mailk Jones and his twin brother, Malcolm Jones, were both charged in connection with Morgan's death, with a grand jury indicting Malcolm Jones on charges of murder by complicity and tampering with physical evidence.

Malcolm Jones also appeared in court Monday, where he was

anticipated to plead guilty to charges of fourth-degree assault and first-degree bail jumping in anticipation of serving a recommended one-year sentence.

Grise continued Malcolm Jones' hearing to Dec. 15 after Jones said he was not satisfied with the advice he had received from attorneys Wes Milliken and John Austin, who are representing him in separate cases.

Malcolm Jones is accused of punching and kicking Morgan during the confrontation at The Muse. He also faces an indictment charging him with trafficking in fentanyl and other drug-related offenses.

## LOCALS

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individuals and families about how they'll afford to live, said Priscilla Easterling — who works as one of Kentucky's health insurance navigators for the ACA healthcare marketplace, kynect, and oversees outreach and enrollment at the non-profit Kentucky Voices for Health. Enrollment is trending down, the Cabinet for Health and Family Services told the Daily News — as data has shown increases in the number of cancellations and downgraded healthcare plans.

More than 90,000 Kentuckians use these plans. Warren County has 3,977 residents this year, or 2.7% of its population, who access them, according to Kentucky Health Benefit Exchange data shared by the non-profit Kentucky Economic Policy.

The surges in ACA plan costs stem from the Dec. 31 expiration of what are called enhanced Advanced Premium Tax Credits (APTCs) — funding helping people afford these plans, set by 2021 COVID relief legislation and temporarily extended in 2022 to supplement existing healthcare credits. Congress is slated to vote on these enhanced APTCs this week, with Republicans anticipated to vote them down — as House Speaker Mike Johnson has reportedly said that most House Republicans oppose it. Opponents have framed the credits as an enormous cost susceptible to fraud, wasteful to those who are wealthier, intended as temporary and inefficiently spent toward insurance companies; they cost about \$35 billion annually, according to the Congressional Budget Office — about 2% of the roughly \$1.7 trillion the U.S. spends annually on discretionary programs.

Slated to expire Dec. 31, the legislation has lowered the maximum amount anyone can pay for premiums; offers the option of certain \$0 health plans to those earning 100% to 150% of the poverty level; and extends the credits to those earning more than 400% of the poverty level for those plans if they would exceed 8.5% of

household income, according to Kentucky Economic Policy.

The credits' expiration is also contributing to an additional surge in the monthly premiums. This year across the kynect plans, Anthem increased premiums for individuals by 24%, Molina increased them 16.3% and Wellcare increased its own by 37%, according to filings.

This is largely because younger adults are expected to disproportionately forgo coverage due to having less need than others — which means insurance companies anticipate needing to cover customers who, more than before, are older, sicker and more likely to cost them money, according to Easterling and Dustin Pugel, policy director at Kentucky Economic Policy.

After reviewing the companies' rate filing documents, Pugel said the surge is mainly due to the credits' expiration and an early Trump administration undoing of marketplace flexibility provisions, as well as — on a lesser note — One Big Beautiful Bill Act measures that will make it more difficult to qualify for coverage. The latter two are anticipated to shrink the pool of people contributing to insurance companies' plans, causing them to increase premiums, Pugel added.

More than four-fifths of the 90,000-plus Kentucky residents on these plans — about 75,000 — received letters at the beginning of this open enrollment period informing them that their health insurance premiums would increase by about \$100 or more per month, Pugel and Easterling said separately, citing Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services data.

Nearly 10,000 are seeing a premium increase of \$500 or more, Easterling added, again citing the Cabinet.

### THOSE WHO CAN PAY

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Pursuant to KRS 65A.040, the Kentucky Department for Local Government hereby gives public notice that as of December 2, 2025, Bowling Green-Warren County Regional Airport is in violation of Kentucky Law for failure to comply with the reporting requirements of KRS 65A.020. The last known point of contact for Bowling Green-Warren County Regional Airport is Susan Harmon, who may be reached at (270) 842-1101 and/or 1000 WOODHURST ST BOWLING GREEN, KY 42103. The last known Board Members are: Eric St John, Christiaan Volkert, Larry Beam, Joy Hunt, Robert Pitchford, Jim Bohannon, Tim Robinson, Harold Little, Mike Cowles, Steven Basham. The district was noncompliant with FY2024 - Annual Audit. The Auditor of Public Accounts has been notified and state funding for this entity will be withheld until further notice. Department for Local Government encourages this entity to comply with the law.

*"It's a shame that people have to forgo their healthcare in order to be able to live."*

**Megan Wingfield**  
*Scottsville resident*

One of the families Easterling assisted had budgeted to cut back on food for the first half of each month so they could afford healthcare, she said. Another family will spend toward health insurance for one family member who has a heart condition, rather than all of them — opting to pay for the other family members' diabetes medications and mental health needs out of pocket. And there are others, she added, who can't afford it.

Megan Wingfield, a Scottsville caregiver for her mother in law, anticipates needing to go without. This past year, the advanced credits covered \$680 for Wingfield and her partner — about the same as their rent.

"We're not disillusioned by the fact we're going to be well outside of affordability when it does expire," she said. "Personally, I don't know anybody who can afford to pay that much for health insurance on top of rent, utilities, gas for work, other expenses for life.

"It's a shame that people have to forgo their healthcare in order to be able to afford to live."

As of Monday, around 82,000 individuals have signed up for a marketplace plan, with more than a tenth canceling their plans or downgrading from silver plans to bronze plans — 5,300 doing the former, and most of 7,300 Kentuckians who changed their plans doing the latter, according to the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Those who canceled may have sought insurance elsewhere, but it's unknown, Pugel said.

"I think that really plays into the broader concerns

about affordability right now. People have to have health insurance: If you're diabetic, you don't have a choice. If you're in the middle of chemotherapy, you don't have a choice," Pugel said. "When people are paying more for health insurance every month, they have less for everything else."

Louisville Public Radio data reporter Justin Hicks crunched state data to calculate how much more certain individuals and families would pay for kynect plans:

The biggest impact concerned a 22-year-old single female not on their family's plan — who would pay more than six times as much as in 2025, or about 603% more in Warren County. Con-

cerning both dollar amounts and percentage, a 60-year-old couple pays much more each month — a \$2,121 increase, or 352%, in the county.

Larger families with children are to pay slightly less than double, with smaller families to pay a little more — in Warren County, the former being an 121% increase, or \$214, and the latter, an 82.5% increase, or \$338.

The numbers are roughly the same across Kentucky, according to the data.

Resident Holly Hudnall, whose employer doesn't offer health insurance, said her family has gone without coverage since June, when her husband was laid off from his work as a computer programmer. Looking at the Kentucky marketplace for next year, she saw a similar plan to they had through her husband's employer would cost \$550 monthly, rather than the previous cost of \$450.

Then, her husband was

offered a contract-to-hire job with a similar income to before that would not provide benefits for six months.

But because of the income, their premium for even a lower-level "Bronze" plan with a high deductible was around \$2,000.

Eventually, her husband was eventually offered benefits through his contract, including a \$900 plan for the whole family.

"That one benefit has completely changed our financial future, and the health outlook for our whole family," she said.

"Of course, I now live in terror of him losing his job again ... but I have to be grateful, at least for now, that this is the outcome. And, again, it also makes me feel guilty because many people in our position are working as much as they can work, and still are not going to be able to afford insurance without more subsidies."



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