# 15-Year-Old Transgender Girl Found Dead in Pennsylvania



On June 23, 2024, 14-year-old transgender girl Pauly Likens was reported missing from her hometown of Sharon, Pennsylvania. Her dismembered remains were discovered in Shenango River Lake on July 3, 2024. This case has sparked substantial reactions from both the local community and national LGBTQ+ advocacy groups.

Pauly, who had just turned 15 on July 6, aspired to be a park ranger. She was last seen near a canoe launch in a public park. Surveillance and social media activity indicated she was waiting to meet someone she'd contacted via the LGBTQ+ dating app, Grindr.

DaShawn Watkins, a 29-year-old resident of Sharon, was arrested and charged with first-degree murder, aggravated assault, abuse of a corpse, and tampering with evidence. Pennsylvania State Police linked him to the crime through surveillance footage and forensic evidence found in his apartment.

Jake News has learned from Mercer County District Attorney Peter Acker that the investigation is ongoing and, as of now, Pauly's death is not being prosecuted as a hate crime. LGBTQ+ advocacy groups are pushing for the case to be reconsidered for hate crime charges, citing Pauly's identity and the context of her death.

Governor Josh Shapiro has expressed his support for stronger state laws to treat LGBTQ+ hate crimes equivalently to other hate crimes.

A candlelight vigil for Pauly is scheduled in Sharon, and a GoFundMe campaign has been set up to assist with funeral expenses. Nationwide, the incident highlights ongoing concerns for the safety and rights of transgender individuals.