



# THE CINCINNATI ENQUIRER

SERVING OHIO AND KENTUCKY SINCE 1841

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1, 2026 | CINCINNATI.COM | PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

## Charges dismissed against man in brawl

Witnesses fail to appear for Tchervinski's trial

**Kevin Grasha**  
Cincinnati Enquirer  
USA TODAY NETWORK

A Hamilton County judge dismissed the case on March 31 against a man charged with a low-level misdemeanor for his actions before a brawl erupted in Downtown in July.

Before jury selection was scheduled to begin in Alex Tchervinski's trial Tuesday, a city prosecutor told Municipal Judge Donte Johnson that two civilian witnesses, who had been subpoenaed, did not show up for the trial. It was the third time witnesses had not shown up. The trial previously was delayed in October and January.

Johnson then dismissed the disorderly conduct charge Tchervinski was facing.

Tchervinski's attorney, Doug Brannon, said "the bogus" charge should never have been filed and that Cincinnati police officials – including the department's current interim chief – didn't believe Tchervinski should ever have been charged.

That's because the 46-year-old didn't commit a crime, Brannon said.

"He always acted in self-defense of himself and his friends that night," Brannon told reporters outside the courtroom. "These were people who were severely beaten, were victims."

Brannon said county prosecutors

See TRIAL, Page 4A



Alex Tchervinski smiles to his supporters after his case is dismissed in the courtroom of Municipal Judge Donte Johnson at the Hamilton County Courthouse on March 31.

SAM GREENE/THE ENQUIRER

SMUGGLED

## Ohio prison workers are rarely charged



### Lack of accountability allows drug trade to flourish

Doug Livingston and Laura A. Bischoff USA TODAY NETWORK OHIO AND THE MARSHALL PROJECT

**B**y early May 2024, multiple people had accused a teacher of dealing drugs and sexually preying on women at a state prison in Dayton. • A hidden camera finally installed in August captured the teacher – who had previously served time for trafficking – passing drugs across his desk, shaking his genitals at students and rubbing up against a woman while dancing in class.

One afternoon, he summoned a woman to his empty classroom and took her into his darkened office. He emerged after a couple minutes, sniffing his fingers and grabbing his groin. The student later alleged that he digitally raped her.

Despite video evidence supporting the woman's story, prosecutors declined to charge the teacher, calling it a "he said, she said case," according to an investigative file. Instead, prosecutors charged two incarcerated women with felony drug possession after they told investigators that the teacher, who simply lost his job, was their dealer.

Workers suspected of smuggling drugs

into Ohio prisons are seldom charged. Many often resign. Some, like the teacher, are fired, but most never face prosecution, according to a yearlong investigation by The Marshall Project - Cleveland, Columbus Dispatch, Cincinnati Enquirer, Akron Beacon Journal and Canton Repository.

"We're the ones that are punished," said one woman, who was charged after filing a sexual assault claim against the teacher, "and everything is blamed on us, and yet staff get no type of punishment, consequence, nothing. They just lose their job,

See PRISON DRUGS, Page 6A

The Ohio State Highway Patrol works with state prison officials to investigate drugs inside Ohio's 27 prisons. Since 2020, prison officers seized suspected drugs nearly 50,000 times. Drugs and cell phones are smuggled by visitors, vendors and employees. PROVIDED BY THE OHIO DEPARTMENT OF REHABILITATION AND CORRECTION

## 3 area chefs selected as Beard finalists

Dworak, Harris, Willocks introduced new cuisine

**Keith Pandolfi**  
Cincinnati Enquirer  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Three Greater Cincinnati chefs have graduated from semifinalists to finalists for the 2026 James Beard Awards. The restaurant and chef award nominees

were announced March 31 on the James Beard Foundation's website and Instagram page.

They include two finalist nods for Best Chef: Great Lakes, which includes Ohio, Illinois, Indiana and Michigan. Among them are Sarah Dworak, owner and chef of Sudova, and Jeff Harris, the

owner and chef of Nolia Kitchen, in Over-the-Rhine.

In Northern Kentucky, David Willocks, the chef and owner of Baker's Table, in Newport, was named a finalist in the category of Best Chef: Southeast, which includes Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina,

See BEARD, Page 4A



From left, Sarah Dworak, Jeff Harris, David Willocks. FRANK BOWEN IV/THE ENQUIRER (LEFT); KAREEM ELGAZZAR/THE ENQUIRER (CENTER); AND PROVIDED BY SHELBY ALBERTZ

### Subscriber-only eNewspaper

The eNewspaper is an electronic copy of your print newspaper. Enjoy every page by going to [cincinnati.com/enewspaper](http://cincinnati.com/enewspaper) or scan this code on your mobile device. You will also find late news and sports in the bonus sections. Check it out today!



Volume 185th | No. 300  
Subscribe 800-876-4500  
©2026 \$3.49  
The Cincinnati Enquirer



0 40901 10101 7