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9:16:20 a.m. [TEASE]

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: Coming Up; Crime & Mental Health]

KELLY O'GRADY: Ahead, in today's By the Way, we are going to take a closer look at the story of a Ukrainian refugee living in North Carolina whose violent death has caused uproar and led to a lot of questions about what, if anything, could have been done to prevent it.

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[ON-SCREEN HEADLINE: By the Way; Crime & Mental Health]

TONY DOKOUPIL: Today, we're taking a closer look at the murder of a young Ukrainian refugee in North Carolina and the outrage surrounding her death. If you aren't familiar with this story, the story of 23-year-old Iryna Zarutka — well, she was stabbed and killed a few weeks ago while riding public transit in Charlotte. It's become quite a political matter at this point. Her accused attacker, the man police say is on that video people have been watching, 34-year-old DeCarlos Brown Jr. That's him on your screen. He's got a history of mental health issues, including schizophrenia, and previously spent more than half a decade behind bars for robbery, had other run ins as well. Many people are therefore struggling to understand why this attack happened, and whether it could have been prevented. You've got mental health challenges, you've got a repeat offender. Those are the things that people want to talk about. More than a third of convicted criminals in North Carolina are arrested again within two years of their release, and severe mental illness — illness plays a major role in how likely someone is to be arrested again. That, according to the Prison Policy Initiative. So, the big question, the high stakes question, what does it take to break that cycle? North Carolina's Democratic governor, Josh Stein, says more police officers are needed on the beat to keep people safe. Meanwhile, President Trump says criminals like this need to be locked up. Joining us now to parse through it all is Rodney Harrison and Dr. Céline Gounder. Rodney is a CBS News law enforcement contributor and former police commissioner of Suffolk County, New York out there in long Island. And Dr. Gounder is a CBS News medical contributor and editor at large for KFF Health News. Thank you both for being here. Commissioner, I want to start with you. It's high stakes. This process of arresting somebody, you get a conviction, they go to prison. They're supposed to be rehabilitated, but so often, they're not. How do you change that?

RODNEY HARRISON: So there's a couple of things that I've seen that worked in the NYPD. You know, under the leadership of Bill Bratton. He put a collaborative policing strategy in place where law enforcement was working with different agencies corrections, parole, probation, prosecutors, making sure we identified these individuals when they reenter back into society and

making sure we have sustainable engagements with them to make sure they were headed in a better direction.

O'GRADY: And just a quick follow up on that. I mean, full disclosure, I grew up in a household where my dad was a policeman. We saw a lot of the stuff that didn't make the news and this individual, he was arrested 14 times. He was out on cashless bail. I think a lot of people are watching this and wondering, how do you prevent someone from falling through the cracks? And what is the role of law enforcement in that?

HARRISON: So, you know, there's going to be a time where people are going to start pointing fingers at different people. We have to take a look at the judicial system, seeing if we have the right things in place to make sure people are being held accountable. Listen, I'm an advocate for victims. This is something that I've done for 30 years to make sure we are supporting individuals that are unfortunately, going through situations where they're being attacked by some of these predators. This is an incident where we have to take a closer look at should this person have been remained incarcerated or should they have been allowed out? And if so, what can we do to make sure we fix it? We had a situation in 2022, in New York City, Michelle Go. She's pushed on a train — pushed on an oncoming, oncoming train. These incidents are happening over and over again. We have to take a look at the mental health crisis that's going on within this country.

DOKOUPIL: Doctor, I want to get you in on this. This individual accused of the stabbing in — in Charlotte, he — his mom tried to get him committed, involuntarily, succeeded for a short time when he made a when he had an encounter with police back in January, he said he was being controlled by a man made device. I mean, these are classic symptoms of schizophrenia. Why is he still out on the street?

DR. CÉLINE GOUNDER: One of the highest risk periods of time is during the transition from incarceration to the community and there are programs that have been established in a number of different places that have been successful by combining clinical care, mental health care, social workers, helping to stabilize people, get them into housing, get them ideally into jobs and into medical care. I'll give you one example. A program called the Coming Home Program here in New York City was doing this. Then you had a big hospital system merger, and that was one of the first programs that gets cut. Unfortunately, these kinds of programs are not big money and we have to decide that this is something as a community, we want to invest in, just as we need to invest in policing. If you want to be addressing the mental health issues of these folks and prevent the recidivism, you do need to be investing in mental health and stabilization.

O'GRADY: And this may be a controversial question, but I think a lot of parents are watching and thinking, well, that could have been my daughter, you know, whether it was Michelle or Iryna or all of these countless examples. Is there a point, Rodney, where it that person is too dangerous to themselves, to others, where you just say, we can't have them on the streets?

HARRISON: Absolutely. But my question for the room is, what are the city managers doing to make sure they are investing in these individuals to get them to help? And if they are not responsive, then unfortunately they have to be in some type of custody.

DOKOUPIL: Dr. Gounder, is there such a thing as people who are beyond help, who have such a repeated pattern of violating society's not only rules, norms, regulations, but also unable to to maintain the the clear functioning of mind to just be among us. I mean, is there a point in which this is just not working?

GOUNDER: Is there? Yes. But have you actually done the work to try to rehabilitate them? And in almost all cases, the answer is no. So you can't really say that you're going to throw people away until you've done the work of trying to rehabilitate, rehabilitate them. And that's just not happening because we're not investing enough in that process.

DOKOUPIL: And it feels like the catch 22 here is you don't want to take people who have their freedoms as Americans and put them away unnecessarily, but you also don't want to wait until they commit a heinous crime before you say, now, we'll get them off the street. What do we do?

HARRISON: Well, reentry is a privilege, and I think it's important that individuals [are] identified. What are we looking to do to implement strategy, to get them the assistance? And what's the next strategy to sustain that assistance? If you don't put those three things together, you're going to have these incidents happening over and over again.

O'GRADY: Yeah, I think a lot of questions still to be figured out, but I really appreciate both of your thoughtful contributions to this conversation. Rodney Harrison, Doctor, appreciate it. That was today's, by the way.