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Travis County District Attorney Ronald Earle today released the following statement:

The purpose of our appearance before you today is to announce the resolution of a case involving the tragic death of a worker at Michael Angelo's Gourmet Foods, Inc.

Here with me today are:

Rosemary Lehmborg, Travis County District Attorney-Elect
Patty Robertson, DA's White Collar Crimes Division chief
David Botsford, attorney for Michael Angelo's
Francine Breckenridge, attorney for Michael Angelo's
Michael Renna, CEO of Michael Angelo's

In June of 2003, Daniel Romero-Cruz, a 34 year-old sanitation worker, was employed at the Michael Angelo's plant here in Travis County.

During his regular night shift, Romero-Cruz was assigned the task of cleaning a large food processor. While cleaning the machine, Romero-Cruz was pulled into the machine and killed. He died an unimaginable and horrific death.

As a result of Romero-Cruz's death, his family received a civil settlement from Michael Angelo's Gourmet Foods. The company also faced potential criminal charges.

This company employs several hundred workers who live in the Austin area. Rather than a prosecution that could destroy the company, our office has reached an agreement with Michael Angelo's Gourmet Foods, Inc.

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This agreement, which we are announcing today, requires Michael Angelo's to:

- undergo additional safety reviews,
- provide safety training to all of its workers,
- promote the attached Worker Safety Standards document, and
- assist the local community in educating the business community and general public about worker safety.

Michael Angelo's Gourmet Foods, Inc. has also agreed to financially support the Equal Justice Center and UT Law School Transnational Worker Rights Clinic, La Fuente Learning Center, El Buen Samaritano and Freedom Writers.

Michael Angelo's will create the Central Texas Employers Council, which will be composed of Central Texas businesses. The purpose of the Council is to identify solutions and successfully address the problem of worker safety concerns in local businesses.

We believe that justice is being done in this matter.

It has been my experience that justice can often be done more effectively with satisfying examples of integrity, responsibility and prosperity than with threats, coercion, and evasions. Our most promising futures are best charted together, admitting our shortcomings and doing our best to set examples that we want others to follow.

None of this will bring Daniel Romero-Cruz back to his family.

What the District Attorney's Office and Michael Angelo's hope to accomplish in memory of Mr. Romero-Cruz, for the sake of his family and for the sake of all of the honest workers and employers in Central Texas and elsewhere is a greater understanding of safety issues faced by workers every day, and ultimately a safer work environment for all working people.