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STATE OF MICHIGAN

COURT OF APPEALS

PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF MICHIGAN, Plaintiff-Appellee,	UNPUBLISHED November 19, 2026 9:36 AM
v	No. 376237 Mecosta Circuit Court
CRAIG HOWARD-ALLEN BLAKELY, Defendant-Appellant.	LC No. 2022-010597-FH

Before: O'BRIEN, P.J., and CAMERON and MALDONADO, JJ.

PER CURIAM.

Defendant appeals by leave granted[1] after he pleaded no contest to one count of assault with intent to cause great bodily harm less than murder or by strangulation, MCL 750.84(1), one count of assault with a dangerous weapon, MCL 750.82(1), and one count of domestic violence, MCL 750.81(2). Defendant was sentenced to concurrent terms of imprisonment of 4 to 10 years for his strangulation conviction, 16 months to 4 years, with credit for 339 days served, for his felonious-assault conviction, and 93 days of time served for his domestic-violence conviction. We remand solely for the ministerial task of correcting defendant's presentence investigation report (PSIR), but otherwise affirm.

I. FACTUAL AND PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

Defendant and the victim dated for three years before she ended their relationship in 2021. After the breakup, the victim alleged that defendant subjected her to constant harassment. Hoping to appease defendant, she eventually agreed to spend time with him as a friend. In September 2022, however, the victim's daughter called the police after defendant held the victim down and choked her until she lost consciousness. The victim reported that defendant strangled her four separate times during the altercation, causing her to lose consciousness or black out each time. At some point, the victim grabbed a knife in an attempt to defend herself, but defendant wrestled it away

[1] *People v Blakely*, unpublished order of the Court of Appeals, entered July 31, 2025 (Docket No. 376237).

from her, held it up to her, and threatened to kill her. Defendant was subsequently charged with four counts of assault by strangulation, one count of interfering with electronic communications, and one count of second-offense domestic violence.

During the trial court proceedings, defendant went through five different court-appointed attorneys, resulting in repeated rescheduling of his trial date. On some occasions the trial was adjourned the same day, with potential jurors already standing by. In April 2024, while released subject to a tether condition, defendant attempted to flee the state. He was subsequently charged with felony absconding and tampering with his tether.

Ultimately, defendant pleaded no contest to the three offenses arising from the 2022 assault in exchange for dismissal of the remaining 2022 charges and both of 2024 charges. The trial court departed upward from defendant's minimum sentencing guidelines range of 10 to 23 months, sentencing him to 48 months to 10 years' imprisonment for the strangulation conviction. This appeal followed.

II. STANDARDS OF REVIEW

A sentence that departs from the sentencing guidelines range is reviewed for reasonableness. *People v Lockridge*, 498 Mich 358, 392; 870 NW2d 502 (2015). A review for reasonableness asks whether the trial court abused its discretion by violating the principle of proportionality. *People v Steanhouse*, 500 Mich 453, 477; 902 NW2d 327 (2017). The abuse-of discretion standard recognizes that the trial court's decision must fall within the range of reasonable and principled outcomes. *People v Boykin*, 510 Mich 171, 182; 987 NW2d 58 (2022).

III. PROPORTIONATE SENTENCING

Defendant argues that his departure sentence for the strangulation conviction was disproportionate and, therefore, unreasonable. We disagree.

When imposing a sentence that departs from the sentencing guidelines, trial courts must "provide adequate reasons for the extent of the departure sentence imposed[.]" *Steanhouse*, 500 Mich at 476; see also *People v Dixon-Bey*, 321 Mich App 490, 525; 909 NW2d 458 (2017). Trial courts need only explain why the sentence imposed was proportionate to the seriousness of the offense and the offender's background "in order to facilitate appellate review[.]" *Steanhouse*, 500 Mich at 470 (quotation marks and citation omitted); see also *Dixon-Bey*, 321 Mich App at 525. While sentencing guidelines are only advisory, trial courts must "consult the applicable guidelines range and take it into account when imposing a sentence[.]" *Steanhouse*, 500 Mich at 470 (quotation marks and citation omitted). In determining whether a departure sentence is more proportionate than a within-guidelines sentence, trial courts should consider "(1) whether the guidelines accurately reflect the seriousness of the crime, (2) factors not considered by the guidelines, and (3) factors considered by the guidelines but given inadequate weight." *Dixon-Bey*, 321 Mich App at 525 (citations omitted). Additional factors a trial court may consider "include the defendant's misconduct while in custody, the defendant's expressions of remorse, and the defendant's potential for rehabilitation." *Id*. at 525 n 9 (quotation marks and citations omitted).

At sentencing, the trial court explained that an upward departure was justified because the guidelines did not adequately account for defendant's criminal history and lack of remorse. The

record supports the trial court's conclusions. Despite the fact that zero points were assessed for prior record variable (PRV) 5, which addresses "prior misdemeanor convictions," MCL 777.55(1), his PSIR indicates that he had a misdemeanor domestic violence conviction in 2010. This undercuts defendant's assertion that he was otherwise "a law abiding and productive member of society." Because the sentencing guidelines did not adequately account for this prior conviction, the trial court could reasonably conclude that defendant's criminal history supported a departure sentence.

The record also supports the trial court's concern about defendant's lack of remorse and low potential for rehabilitation. Defendant argues that, because he was in his mid-50s at sentencing, he was less likely to reoffend than a younger offender. Defendant's prior domestic-violence conviction undermines that assertion: despite his age, he committed another violent act against a person with whom he had a domestic relationship. Moreover, the circumstances of this case suggest an escalation in the seriousness of his conduct.

Defendant also characterizes his offenses as arising from "a broken, long-term romantic relationship," and "emotional problems." Defendant's characterization of his crimes minimizes their severity. The victim ended the relationship a year before defendant committed the assaults, yet he continued harassing her in an effort to remain in her life. His conduct ultimately escalated to repeatedly strangling her and threatening to kill her with a knife. The record also does not substantiate defendant's suggestion that "emotional problems" contributed to his behavior. In his PSIR, defendant reported that he was "in good mental health[,]" and the record contains no evidence indicating any specific mental health diagnoses to the contrary.

Defendant's statements at sentencing further support the trial court's assessment. He expressed no remorse for his actions. Not only did he attempt to portray himself as having been entirely selfless and caring to the victim, defendant also attempted to shift blame by implying that the victim was the source of the problems in their relationship. The trial court reasonably viewed defendant's unwillingness to acknowledge his conduct as raising significant concerns about his potential to commit similar crimes in the future. Considering all of the evidence in this case undermining defendant's claims, we conclude that the trial court did not abuse its discretion by sentencing defendant above his guidelines range.

Finally, defendant argues that remand is necessary to correct an error in his PSIR concerning the sentencing guideline range for his strangulation conviction. The PSIR incorrectly identifies his sentencing guidelines range as 19 to 38 months. The trial court acknowledged at sentencing that the correct range was 10 to 23 months. Because defendant's PSIR "may have ramifications for purposes of security classification or parole consideration when appropriate[,]" *People v Maben*, 313 Mich App 545, 553; 884 NW2d 314 (2015) (quotation marks and citation omitted), remand to the trial court is appropriate for the sole clerical task of correcting defendant's PSIR.

Accordingly, we affirm defendant's sentences but remand to the trial court to correct defendant's PSIR. We do not retain jurisdiction.

/s/ Colleen A. O'Brien
/s/ Thomas C. Cameron
/s/ Allie Greenleaf Maldonado