

No. \_\_\_\_\_

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IN THE  
**SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES**

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**GAVIN HAROLD,**

*Petitioner,*

v.

**UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,**

*Respondent.*

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**On Petition for Writ of Certiorari to the  
United States Court of Appeals  
for the Eleventh Circuit**

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**PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI**

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## QUESTION PRESENTED

In 2018, Congress enacted the Amy, Vicky, and Andy Child Pornography Victim Assistance Act, which established a mandatory minimum restitution amount of \$3,000 per victim for certain child exploitation offenses. *See 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b)(2)(B).*

As this Court has repeatedly held, the Sixth Amendment guarantees a right to have a jury find all the facts necessary to criminal punishment. Thus, a jury must find any fact that increases the statutory maximum penalty, *Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466 (2000), as well as any fact that increases the mandatory minimum, *Alleyne v. United States*, 570 U.S. 99, 103 (2013). This bedrock constitutional rule applies “broadly” to all forms of criminal punishment, including monetary penalties like fines. *Southern Union Co. v. United States*, 567 U.S. 343, 350 (2012).

The question presented is: Does the Sixth Amendment require a jury to find the facts needed to justify a restitution order meeting or exceeding § 2259(b)(2)(B)’s \$3,000 mandatory minimum?

## **RELATED PROCEEDINGS**

United States District Court (M.D. Fla.)

*United States v. Harold*, Case No. 2:23-cr-00054-TPB-KCD-1

United States Court of Appeals (11th Cir.)

*United States v. Harold*, Nos. 24-10825 & 24-12506

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## **PETITION FOR A WRIT OF CERTIORARI**

Gavin Harold respectfully petitions for a writ of certiorari to review the judgment of the United States Court of Appeals for the Eleventh Circuit.

### **ORDER AND OPINION BELOW**

The Eleventh Circuit's opinion affirming Mr. Harold's restitution order is unpublished and is provided in the Appendix.

### **JURISDICTION**

The Eleventh Circuit affirmed Mr. Harold's restitution order on September 17, 2025. This Court has jurisdiction under 28 U.S.C. § 1254(1).

## **RELEVANT CONSTITUTIONAL AND STATUTORY PROVISIONS**

The Sixth Amendment to the United States Constitution states in relevant part: “In all criminal prosecutions, the accused shall enjoy the right to a speedy and public trial, by an impartial jury of the state and district wherein the crime shall have been committed, which district shall have been previously ascertained by law . . . .” U.S. Const. amend. VI.

Section 2259 of Title 18 of the United States Code states in relevant part:

**(a) In General.**—Notwithstanding section 3663 or 3663A, and in addition to any other civil or criminal penalty authorized by law, the court shall order restitution for any offense under this chapter.

**(b) Scope and Nature of Order.—**

....

**(2) Restitution for trafficking in child pornography.**—If the defendant was convicted of trafficking in child pornography, the court shall order restitution under this section in an amount to be determined by the court as follows:

**(A) Determining the full amount of a victim’s losses.**— The court shall determine the full amount of the victim’s losses that were incurred or are reasonably projected to be incurred by the victim as a result of the trafficking in child pornography depicting the victim.

**(B)** Determining a restitution amount.— After completing the determination required under subparagraph (A), the court shall order restitution in an amount that reflects the defendant's relative role in the causal process that underlies the victim's losses, but which is no less than \$3,000.

**(C)** Termination of payment.— A victim's total aggregate recovery pursuant to this section shall not exceed the full amount of the victim's demonstrated losses. After the victim has received restitution in the full amount of the victim's losses as measured by the greatest amount of such losses found in any case involving that victim that has resulted in a final restitution order under this section, the liability of each defendant who is or has been ordered to pay restitution for such losses to that victim shall be terminated. The court may require the victim to provide information concerning the amount of restitution the victim has been paid in other cases for the same losses.

**(3) Enforcement.**— An order of restitution under this section shall be issued and enforced in accordance with section 3664 in the same manner as an order under section 3663A.

**(4) Order mandatory.—**

**(A)** The issuance of a restitution order under this section is mandatory.

**(B)** A court may not decline to issue an order under this section because of—

**(i)** the economic circumstances of the defendant; or

**(ii)** the fact that a victim has, or is entitled to, receive compensation for his or her injuries from the proceeds of insurance or any other source.

**(c) Definitions.—**

....

**(2) Full amount of the victim's losses.**—For purposes of this subsection, the term “full amount of the victim's losses” includes any costs incurred, or that are reasonably projected to be incurred in the future, by the victim, as a proximate result of the offenses involving the victim, and in the case of trafficking in child pornography offenses, as a proximate result of all trafficking in child pornography offenses involving the same victim, including—

**(A)** medical services relating to physical, psychiatric, or psychological care;

**(B)** physical and occupational therapy or rehabilitation;

**(C)** necessary transportation, temporary housing, and child care expenses;

**(D)** lost income;

**(E)** reasonable attorneys' fees, as well as other costs incurred; and

**(F)** any other relevant losses incurred by the victim.

....

**(4) Victim.**—For purposes of this section, the term “victim” means the individual harmed as a result of a commission of a crime under this chapter. In the case of a victim who is under 18 years of age, incompetent, incapacitated, or deceased, the legal guardian of the victim or representative of the victim’s estate, another family member, or any other person appointed as suitable by the court, may assume the crime victim’s rights under this section, but in no event shall the defendant be named as such representative or guardian.

## INTRODUCTION

Section 2259 of Title 18 of the United States Code creates a mandatory restitution scheme for child exploitation offenses. When a defendant is convicted of trafficking in child pornography, the court “shall order restitution” for any victim in an amount that is “no less than \$3,000.” 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b)(2)(B). That restitution order, however, does not flow automatically from the facts needed to convict the defendant.

Rather, the district court must find additional facts—not reflected in the jury verdict or admission of guilt—before it can order restitution. First, a victim or victims must be identified. *See id.* § 2259(b)(2)(A); *id.* § 2259(c)(4) (defining “victim”). Second, the full amount of the victim’s losses caused by the trafficking must be determined. *Id.* § 2259(b)(2)(A); *see id.* § 2259(c)(2) (defining “full amount of the victim’s losses”). Third, if there is an identified victim with losses, the restitution order must reflect the defendant’s relative role in causing the losses. *Id.* § 2259(b)(2)(B). And regardless of a victim’s losses or the defendant’s causal role, the restitution order must be for no less than \$3,000. *Id.*

This Court’s precedent makes clear that relying on judicial factfinding to impose restitution under § 2259(b)(2)(B) violates the Sixth

Amendment. A jury must find the facts necessary to impose an increased mandatory minimum penalty. *Alleyne v. United States*, 570 U.S. 99 (2013); *see also Apprendi v. New Jersey*, 530 U.S. 466 (2000) (holding that jury must find facts that increase statutory maximum). That principle applies not only to increased statutory ranges of imprisonment but also to any form of criminal punishment, including monetary penalties. *Southern Union Co. v. United States*, 567 U.S. 343 (2012). And this Court has recognized that criminal restitution is part of the criminal penalty. *See, e.g., Paroline v. United States*, 572 U.S. 434, 456 (2014); *Kelly v. Robinson*, 479 U.S. 36, 49 n.10, 53 (1986).

Yet, in the decision below, the Eleventh Circuit exempted restitution from the Sixth Amendment right to a jury trial. Its reasoning contradicts this Court’s precedent and is incompatible with the original understanding of the Sixth Amendment. Other courts of appeal that have considered whether a restitution order based on judge-found facts violates the Sixth Amendment have similarly misapplied this Court’s precedent. At the same time, the imposition of onerous restitution awards is increasing nationwide. This Court’s intervention is urgently needed to protect the fundamental right to a criminal jury trial.

## STATEMENT OF THE CASE

Following his guilty plea, the district court sentenced Mr. Gavin Harold to a 78-month term of imprisonment followed by a lifetime of supervised release. Doc. 108 at 1-3.<sup>1</sup> The district court deferred with respect to restitution and scheduled a separate hearing for a later date. *Id.* at 6.

After sentencing, Mr. Harold filed written restitution objections and requested that a jury be empaneled to determine restitution. Doc. 99. He explained that he had a right to have a jury determine his restitution amount because 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b)(2)(B) increased his mandatory minimum penalty, and under the Fifth and Sixth Amendments, he had the right to have a jury find any fact that increased his mandatory minimum. *Id.* at 2-3. The facts that Mr. Harold admitted to, he explained, did not include the facts necessary to impose restitution under § 2259, namely the identity of the victims and their losses. *Id.* at 4-5. Furthermore, a “penalty” included restitution and fines. *Id.* Because the statutory maximum and minimum for restitution is zero, the

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<sup>1</sup> “Doc.” references the district court docket entries in this case.

mandatory minimum restitution amount set forth in § 2259 required judicial factfinding and thus violated the Supreme Court’s holding in *Alleyne* and *Apprendi*. *Id.* at 6-12.

The government responded asking for the court to order \$69,194.12 in restitution and opposing Mr. Harold’s request to empanel a jury because it viewed restitution as restorative rather than punitive. Doc. 100 at 3-8.

The district court denied Mr. Harold’s request to empanel a jury in a paperless order. Doc. 101. At the restitution hearing, Mr. Harold renewed his constitutional objection to the mandatory restitution amount, which the court overruled. Doc. 115 at 5-6. In its amended judgment, the court ordered Mr. Harold to pay restitution to each of the eight victims totaling \$37,000. Doc. 108 at 6-7.

On appeal, Mr. Harold renewed his challenge to the restitution order, arguing that it violated his constitutional rights under *Apprendi* and *Alleyne*.

While his appeal was pending, the Eleventh Circuit decided *United States v. Kluge*, 147 F.4th 1291 (11th Cir. 2025) *cert. filed*, No. 25-6010

(U.S. Oct. 31, 2025),<sup>2</sup> which held that restitution is not a criminal penalty for purposes of the Sixth Amendment and rejected the very claim presented here. The court undertook the task of wading through its prior precedent on restitution: on the one hand, there was caselaw holding that restitution was a criminal penalty, *United States v. Twitty*, 107 F.3d 1482, 1492 n.12 (11th Cir. 1997), but on the other hand, the court had held that restitution was a civil penalty for purposes of *Apprendi*, *United States v. Dohrmann*, 442 F.3d 1279, 1281 (11th Cir. 2006). *Kluge*, 147 F.4th at 1302-03. The court concluded it was bound by its prior holdings stating that *Apprendi* does not apply to restitution, and it “extend[ed] that holding to restitution orders pursuant to § 2259(b)(2)(B).” *Id.* at 1303. Thus, the court rejected Mr. Kluge’s constitutional challenge under *Apprendi* and *Alleyne* and affirmed the restitution order. *Id.*

As a result of the court’s conclusion in *Kluge*, the panel in Mr. Harold’s opinion rejected Mr. Harold’s Sixth Amendment argument and held that it was bound by the decision in *Kluge*. *United States v. Harold*, Nos. 24-10825 & 24-12506, 2025 WL 2659685 at \*1 (11th Cir. Sept. 17,

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<sup>2</sup> This Court has requested that the Solicitor General file a response by December 17, 2025.

2025).

This petition follows.

## REASONS FOR GRANTING THE WRIT

- I. The decision below contravenes this Court's Sixth Amendment precedent.**
  - A. Under the Sixth Amendment, facts triggering a mandatory minimum restitution order must be proved to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt.**

In *Apprendi* this Court held that, except for the fact of a prior conviction, the Sixth Amendment requires that any fact that would increase the punishment for a crime beyond the prescribed statutory maximum must be presented to the factfinder and proven beyond a reasonable doubt. 530 U.S. at 490. “[T]he ‘statutory maximum’ for *Apprendi* purposes is the maximum sentence a judge may impose *solely on the basis of the facts reflected in the jury verdict or admitted by the defendant.*” *Blakely v. Washington*, 542 U.S. 296, 303 (2004).

The Court later extended *Apprendi*’s rule to mandatory minimums. *Alleyne*, 570 U.S. at 103, 116. The Court clarified that although *Apprendi* had been limited to facts increasing the statutory maximum, *Apprendi*’s underlying principle carries the same weight when it comes to facts that elevate the mandatory minimum. *See id.* at 111-12. *Alleyne*’s reasoning was based on the recognition that a fact triggering a mandatory minimum alters the prescribed sentencing range for a criminal

defendant. *Id.* at 112. Because the legally prescribed range represents the penalty associated with the offense, it follows that a fact affecting either end of the range results in a new penalty and constitutes an essential element of the offense. *See id.*

In the years since, this Court “has not hesitated to strike down” sentencing procedures “that fail to respect the jury’s supervisory function.” *United States v. Haymond*, 586 U.S. 2369, 2377 (2019) (plurality opinion). Just last year, for example, the Court held that to impose an enhanced statutory range under the Armed Career Criminal Act (ACCA), 18 U.S.C. § 924(e), the statute’s “different occasions” requirement must be proved to a unanimous jury beyond a reasonable doubt. *Erlinger v. United States*, 602 U.S. 821 (2024).

The Court has also explained that this bedrock constitutional rule is not limited to facts that increase terms of imprisonment—it applies “broadly” to “prohibit judicial factfinding that increases maximum criminal sentences, penalties, or punishments.” *Southern Union*, 567 U.S. at 350 (cleaned up). Indeed, this Court “ha[s] never distinguished one form of punishment from another” for purposes of *Apprendi*. *Id.*

Thus, in *Southern Union*, the Court held that a jury must find the facts necessary to impose criminal fines. *Id.*

Like fines, restitution ordered in criminal cases is a monetary criminal penalty whose “purpose” is “to mete out appropriate criminal punishment.” *Pasquantino v. United States*, 544 U.S. 349, 365 (2005). And like the fine in *Southern Union*, restitution orders under 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b) require additional factfinding. *Compare* 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b), *with Southern Union*, 567 U.S. at 350. Because those facts increase the statutory minimum (and maximum) penalty a defendant faces, the Sixth Amendment demands that the government prove them to a jury.

This result is not only compelled by the Court’s precedent, it is consistent with the “historical role of the jury at common law.” *Southern Union*, 567 U.S. at 353. A review of the historical record supports that facts affecting the statutory maximum or minimum amount of restitution must be admitted by the defendant or submitted to a jury and proven beyond a reasonable doubt. *See* James Barta, *Guarding the Rights of the Accused and Accuser: The Jury’s Role in Awarding Criminal Restitution Under the Sixth Amendment*, 51 AM. CRIM. L. REV. 463, 473-76 (2014).

Indeed, “as long ago as the time of Henry VIII, an English statute

entitling victims to the restitution of stolen goods allowed courts to order the return only of those goods mentioned in the indictment and found stolen by a jury.” *Hester v. United States*, 586 U.S. 1104, 1107 (2019) (Gorsuch, J., joined by Sotomayor, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari); *see also Southern Union*, 567 U.S. at 354 (discussing authority suggesting English juries had to find value of property taken to authorize pecuniary punishment). “In America, too, courts held that in prosecutions for larceny, the jury usually had to find the value of the stolen property before restitution to the victim could be ordered.” *Hester*, 586 U.S. at 1107 (Gorsuch, J., joined by Sotomayor, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari). As two Justices of this Court opined, “it’s hard to see why the right to a jury trial should mean less to the people today than it did to those at the time of the Sixth . . . Amendment’s adoption.” *Id.*

In short, a historical understanding of the Sixth Amendment confirms what this Court’s precedent compels: a jury must find the facts necessary to order restitution. This result is especially clear as applied to an order under § 2259(b)(2), where the factfinding triggers a \$3,000 mandatory minimum restitution order.

**B. The Eleventh Circuit’s decision that a jury need not find the facts necessary to trigger § 2259(b)(2)(B)’s \$3,000 mandatory minimum is wrong.**

In holding that *Apprendi* and *Alleyne* do not apply to mandatory minimum restitution orders under § 2259(b)(2), the Eleventh Circuit relied on the faulty premise that restitution is not a criminal penalty and therefore does not implicate the right to a jury trial. *Harold*, 2025 WL 2659685 at \*1. Some other circuits have reached a similar conclusion. See *United States v. Wolfe*, 701 F.3d 1206, 1206 (7th Cir. 2012); *United States v. Millot*, 433 F.3d 1057, 1062 (8th Cir. 2006); see also *United States v. Serawop*, 505 F.3d 1112, 1122 (10th Cir. 2007) (holding that the rule of lenity does not apply to MVRA because restitution does not inflict criminal punishment).

That is wrong. The jury trial right applies “[i]n all criminal prosecutions.” U.S. Const., amend. VI. And restitution is “imposed by the Government ‘at the culmination of a criminal proceeding and requires conviction of an underlying’ crime.” *Paroline*, 572 U.S. at 456 (quoting *United States v. Bajakajian*, 524 U.S. 321, 328 (1998)); see *Manrique v. United States*, 581 U.S. 116, 118 (2017) (“Sentencing courts are required to impose restitution as part of the sentence for specified crimes.”)).

This Court has repeatedly recognized that restitution is a criminal penalty with “punitive purposes.” *See, e.g., Paroline*, 572 U.S. at 456; *Pasquantino*, 544 U.S. at 365 (“The purpose of awarding restitution” is “to mete out appropriate criminal punishment for that conduct.”). As the Court observed in *Kelly*, restitution is an “effective rehabilitative penalty” that “[has] a more precise deterrent effect than a traditional fine.” 479 U.S. at 49 n.10, 50–53.

The statutory scheme confirms that the restitution ordered in Mr. Harold’s case is a criminal penalty. Section 2259 classifies restitution as a “penalty” for the “offense” that is triggered when a defendant is “convicted” of certain crimes. 18 U.S.C. § 2259(a), (b)(2); *see Hester*, 586 U.S. at 1107 (Gorsuch, J. joined by Sotomayor, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari) (“Federal statutes, too, describe restitution as a ‘penalty’ imposed on the defendant as part of his criminal sentence . . .”). That § 2259(b) imposes a \$3,000 minimum—regardless of the victim’s actual losses or the defendant’s causal contribution to them—reflects the statute’s penal goals. If it were purely compensatory, then the focus would remain on the victim’s losses and Mr. Harold’s causal role in those losses to try and make the victim whole again. Additionally, because

paying restitution is both a mandatory condition of supervised release, 18 U.S.C. § 3583(d), and enforceable like a fine, § 3664(m)(1)(A)(i), restitution can be enforced through reimprisonment. Thus, the statutory scheme lays bare that restitution is part of the criminal penalty.

**II. The question presented is important, recurring, and unlikely to be resolved without this Court’s intervention.**

“Restitution plays an increasing role in federal criminal sentencing today.” *Hester*, 586 U.S. at 1105 (Gorsuch, J., joined by Sotomayor, J., dissenting from the denial of certiorari). Before enactment of the MVRA in 1996, “restitution orders were comparatively rare.” *Id.* But “between 1996 and 2016, the amount of unpaid federal criminal restitution rose from less than \$6 billion to more than \$110 billion.” *Id.* at 1106. And “from 2014 to 2016 alone, federal courts sentenced 33,158 defendants to pay \$33.9 billion in restitution.” *Id.* Criminal restitution continues to shape our criminal legal system. In 2024, federal courts ordered over 8,000 defendants to pay nearly \$13.5 billion in restitution, with a mean award of more than \$1.65 million. U.S. Sent’g Comm’n, 2024 Sourcebook of Federal Sentencing Statistics tbl. 17.

And when defendants do not comply with their restitution orders—a common occurrence, *see Wayne LaFave, Criminal Procedure* § 26.6(c) (2024)—they face severe consequences. “Failure or inability to pay restitution can result in suspension of the right to vote, continued court supervision, or even reincarceration.” *Hester*, 586 U.S. at 1106 (Gorsuch, J., joined by Sotomayor, J., dissenting from the denial of certiorari); *see also* 18 U.S.C. § 3664(m)(1)(A)(i) (providing that restitution may be enforced in same manner as fines). The consequences are particularly troubling for indigent defendants—like Mr. Harold—as restitution is often imposed without regard for the individual’s ability to pay. *See, e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b)(4)(B).

These penalties are not just onerous but are, in fact, unconstitutional under the Sixth Amendment. As this Court recently explained, the Sixth Amendment requires asking the government to prove its case with the necessary evidence before exposing criminal defendants to enhanced punishments. *See Erlinger*, 602 U.S. at 835 n.1.

Despite that, the appellate courts that have considered whether the Sixth Amendment’s jury trial right applies to restitution have answered “no.” *See United States v. Milkiewicz*, 470 F.3d 390, 403–04 (1st Cir.

2006); *United States v. Bengis*, 783 F.3d 407, 412-13 (2d Cir. 2015); *United States v. Leahy*, 438 F.3d 328, 335-38 (3d Cir. 2006) (*en banc*); *United States v. Day*, 700 F.3d 713, 732 (4th Cir. 2012); *United States v. Rosbottom*, 763 F.3d 408, 420 (5th Cir. 2014); *United States v. Churn*, 800 F.3d 768, 782 (6th Cir. 2015); *Wolfe*, 701 F.3d at 1206 (7th Cir.); *Millot*, 433 F.3d at 1062 (8th Cir.); *United States v. Green*, 722 F.3d 1146, 1149-51 (9th Cir. 2013); *United States v. Burns*, 800 F.3d 1258, 1261-62 (10th Cir. 2015)<sup>3</sup>. These courts have relied on one or more of three faulty reasons to conclude that using judicial factfinding to impose criminal restitution comports with the Sixth Amendment.

First, a minority of circuits have concluded, like the Eleventh Circuit, that restitution does not implicate the right to a jury trial because restitution is not a criminal penalty. *Kluge*, 147 F.4th at 1302; *see also Wolfe*, 701 F.3d at 1206 (7th Cir.); *Millot*, 433 F.3d at 1062 (8th Cir.); *Serawop*, 505 F.3d at 1122 (holding that the rule of lenity does not

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<sup>3</sup> The Eleventh Circuit seems to be the only circuit to have addressed whether § 2259(b)(2)(B)'s \$3,000 mandatory minimum violates *Alleyne*. The Fifth Circuit was recently presented with this specific issue but did not address it. *See United States v. Caudillo*, 110 F.4th 808, 811-12 (5th Cir. 2024).

apply to the MVRA because restitution does not inflict criminal punishment). This is wrong because it conflicts both with this Court’s precedents and with the statutory scheme for restitution.

Second, at least seven circuits have held that criminal restitution orders are exempt from *Apprendi* because restitution statutes prescribe no statutory maximum. *See, e.g., Bengis*, 783 F.3d at 412-13 (2d Cir.); *Day*, 700 F.3d at 732 (4th Cir.); *Rosbottom*, 763 F.3d at 420 (5th Cir.); *Churn*, 800 F.3d at 782 (6th Cir.); *Millot*, 433 F.3d at 1062 (8th Cir.); *Green*, 722 F.3d at 1150 (9th Cir.); *Burns*, 800 F.3d at 1261-62 (10th Cir.).

This reasoning is wrong because it misunderstands the concept of a statutory maximum. “The ‘statutory maximum’ for *Apprendi* purposes is the maximum sentence a judge may impose *solely on the basis of the facts reflected in the jury verdict or admitted by the defendant.*” *Blakely*, 542 U.S. at 303-04. That is, “the relevant ‘statutory maximum’ is not the maximum sentence a judge may impose after finding additional facts, but the maximum he may impose without any additional findings.” *Id.*

Applying the correct understanding, the “statutory maximum” amount of restitution “is usually *zero*, because a court can’t award *any* restitution without finding additional facts about the victim’s loss.”

*Hester*, 586 U.S. at 1107 (Gorsuch, J., joined by Sotomayor, J., dissenting from the denial of certiorari); *see Milkiewicz*, 470 F.3d at 403 (“If the question is whether the verdict ‘alone’ allows the judges to impose restitution with no additional finding of fact, obviously it doesn’t.”). That § 2259 itself contains no “prescribed statutory maximum” is thus irrelevant for Sixth Amendment purposes; what matters is that imposing restitution under that statute requires a district court to find additional facts beyond those established by the conviction itself.

But even if those circuits were correct that restitution statutes like 18 U.S.C. § 3663 and § 3663A do not implicate *Apprendi* because they lack a statutory maximum—such that courts may find the facts necessary to impose restitution under those statutes—the Sixth Amendment would still prohibit judicial factfinding under the statute at issue here, § 2259(b)(2)(B).

That is because, regardless of whether § 2259(b)(2)(B) has a separate “statutory maximum,” the statute has a separate mandatory *minimum*. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b)(2)(B) (setting \$3,000 statutory minimum). And under *Alleyne*, the factfinding required to impose that

mandatory minimum must be found by a jury. *See Alleyne*, 570 U.S. at 103, 116.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, the Fifth Circuit recognized the *Alleyne* distinction in *United States v. Caudillo*, 110 F.4th 808, 811-12 (5th Cir. 2024). There, the government argued that circuit precedent finding *Apprendi* inapplicable to restitution statutes without a statutory maximum resolved that § 2259(b)(2)(B) did not implicate *Alleyne*. *Id.* The Fifth Circuit disagreed. Its earlier decisions concerned a different restitution statute with no mandatory minimum. *Id.* Thus, the court explained, its prior precedents did “not govern whether factual determinations that increase the statutory *minimum* amount of restitution [under § 2259(b)(2)(B)] must be admitted by a defendant or found beyond a reasonable doubt.” *Id.* at 812.

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<sup>4</sup> Section 2259(b)(2)(C), which states that the liability of a defendant ordered to pay restitution shall be terminated after a victim’s total aggregate recovery meets the full amount of her losses, doesn’t change that constitutional command. That liability may later be “terminated” is distinct from the restitution order itself, which is a criminal penalty subject to the \$3,000 mandatory minimum. And *Alleyne* requires a jury find all the facts to support a mandatory minimum penalty, even if that minimum can be broken through the application of other statutes, such as substantial assistance under 18 U.S.C. § 3553(e) or the safety valve under 18 U.S.C. § 3553(f).

The Fifth Circuit ultimately did not resolve the *Alleyne* issue because the defendant had waived his Sixth Amendment argument. *Id.* But its acknowledgment that § 2259(b)(2)(B)'s mandatory minimum raises distinct Sixth Amendment concerns is in tension with the decision below. And it highlights why this Court's intervention is needed to clarify the Sixth Amendment jury trial right for criminal restitution, especially for restitution orders under a statute like § 2259(b)(2), which implicates both a mandatory minimum and a statutory maximum.

Third, a couple circuits have suggested that a restitution order based on judicial factfinding comports with the Sixth Amendment because a conviction automatically authorizes restitution for the full amount of loss. The Third Circuit reached this conclusion over a five-judge dissent. *Leahy*, 438 F.3d at 335-38; *see id.* at 339-48 (McKee, J., joined by four other judges, dissenting in part). The First Circuit also adopted this reasoning. *See Milkiewicz*, 470 F.3d at 404 (holding that a jury verdict results in restitution for the full amount of the victim's losses). But their reasoning misapprehends the statutory scheme and this Court's Sixth Amendment precedent.

Imposing any restitution under § 2259(b)(2)—including the \$3,000

mandatory minimum—requires additional factfinding beyond the facts needed to convict the defendant of a child pornography offense. One or more victims must be identified; the amount of the victim’s losses caused by the trafficking must be determined; and, if there is an identified victim with losses, the restitution order must reflect the defendant’s relative role in causing the losses. *See supra* at 6.<sup>5</sup> The Sixth Amendment’s command is clear: those facts must be admitted by the defendant or proven to a jury beyond a reasonable doubt. *See Alleyne*, 570 U.S. at 103; *see also Apprendi*, 530 U.S. at 490; *Blakely*, 542 U.S. at 303-04; *Southern Union*, 567 U.S. at 350.

For the sake of comparison, consider the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act of 1976 (“RCRA”), the statute at issue in *Southern Union*. Violations of RCRA are subject to a fine of \$50,000 per day. *Southern Union*, 567 U.S. at 347. This Court held that when a jury finds a defendant violated the RCRA but does not find the number of days the defendant engaged in a violation, judicial factfinding to determine the number of days enlarges the punishment beyond what the jury’s verdict

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<sup>5</sup> Ordering restitution under other statutes, like § 3663 or § 3663A, similarly requires additional factfinding.

allowed, in violation of the Sixth Amendment. *Id.* at 352.

The Sixth Amendment compels the same result here. Just as a jury must find the number of days a defendant violated RCRA, the Sixth Amendment requires that a jury find the number and identity of the victim(s), their total losses, and the portion of those losses attributable to the defendant before a court may impose restitution under § 2259(b).

To the extent the First and Third Circuits suggest that the \$3,000 mandatory minimum is a legislative determination of the *per se* harm a child pornography victim suffers, it misses that, separate from any harm finding, the imposition of the mandatory minimum still requires additional judicial factfinding—namely, that a particular individual is a “victim” of the offense. *See* 18 U.S.C. § 2259(c)(4) (defining “victim”); *Paroline*, 572 U.S. at 445 (“[I]f the defendant’s offense conduct did not cause harm to an individual, that individual is by definition not a ‘victim’ entitled to restitution under § 2259.”). In Mr. Harold’s case, the district court found by a preponderance of the evidence that there were eight alleged victims. And based on that judicial factfinding, the district court ordered Mr. Harold to pay \$37,000 in restitution as part of the penalty for his crime.

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After years of percolation, the courts of appeals have held tight to their precedent, despite Justices of this Court and federal circuit judges highlighting inconsistencies between circuit precedent and this Court’s Sixth Amendment jurisprudence. *See, e.g., Hester*, 586 U.S. at 1105-07 (Gorsuch, J., and Sotomayor, J., dissenting from denial of certiorari); *Leahy*, 438 F.3d at 339–48 (McKee, J., dissenting, joined by four other judges) (“A finding of loss necessarily is a condition precedent to an order of restitution, and . . . it is the judge who makes the finding. As I have explained, the imposition of this additional criminal penalty based on a fact not found by a jury violates the Sixth Amendment.”); *United States v. Carruth*, 418 F.3d 900, 904-06 (8th Cir. 2005) (Bye, J., dissenting) (“Once we recognize restitution as being a ‘criminal penalty’ the proverbial *Apprendi* dominoes begin to fall.”).

In short, the courts of appeals are stuck. As the Ninth Circuit explained, “[o]ur precedents are clear that *Apprendi* doesn’t apply to restitution, but that doesn’t mean our caselaw’s well-harmonized with *Southern Union*. Had *Southern Union* come down before our cases, those cases might have come out differently. Nonetheless, our panel can’t base

its decision on what the law might have been.” *Green*, 722 F.3d at 1146.

What the courts of appeals cannot or will not fix, this Court must.

### **III. This case is a good vehicle.**

This case is a good vehicle to uphold the right to a jury trial. The issue is well preserved and has a material impact for Mr. Harold, an indigent defendant now facing an onerous criminal penalty based solely on judicial factfinding.

Mr. Harold raised his Sixth Amendment argument in the district court, where he requested a jury trial. Doc. 99 at 2-5. The district court rejected his request, Doc. 101, and based the \$37,000 restitution order on its own factfinding from exhibits tendered by the government, *see* Doc. 115 at 5; Doc. 108 at 6-7. Mr. Harold renewed the Sixth Amendment *Alleyne* issue before the Eleventh Circuit, where the panel rejected it.

This Court recently heard oral argument in *Ellingsburg v. United States*, No. 24-482, where the issue is “[w]hether criminal restitution under the Mandatory Victims Restitution Act (MVRA) is penal for purposes of the Ex Post Facto Clause.” This case presents the related but distinct question of whether the Sixth Amendment’s jury trial right applies to restitution under 18 U.S.C. § 2259(b) because restitution is

part of the criminal penalty. Thus, this Court should grant Mr. Harold's petition, which is an ideal vehicle for resolving an issue *Ellenburg* will likely leave open: the Sixth Amendment's role in criminal restitution orders.

## CONCLUSION

The right to a trial by jury is “at the heart of our criminal justice system.” *Erlinger*, 602 U.S. at 831. Yet judges continue to find for themselves the facts necessary to trigger criminal penalties in the form of restitution orders. Until this Court steps in to address mandatory restitution orders, judges will continue to usurp the jury’s critical role and impose punishment in the form of onerous restitution orders.

The Court should grant the petition for a writ of certiorari. Alternatively, the Court should hold the petition pending its consideration in *Kluge*, No. 25-6010, and then dispose of it as it deems appropriate.

Respectfully submitted,

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