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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

September 7, 2023

**FOLLOWING GUILTY PLEA BLAKE MARTIN SENTENCED TO 20 YEARS IN PRISON WITHOUT PAROLE FOR RAPE, AGGRAVATED SODOMY, AND AGGRAVATED CHILD MOLESTATION**

On September 6, 2023, Blake Martin, 18, of Villa Rica, pled guilty in Carroll County Superior Court to Rape, two counts of Aggravated Sodomy, two counts of Aggravated Child Molestation, and other charges. Pursuant to a guilty plea negotiated by the State, Carroll County Judge Michael Hubbard sentenced Martin to 20 years in prison without the possibility of parole followed by life on probation and sex offender registration.

Assistant District Attorney Wade Mason and DA Investigator Katia Detwiler prosecuted the case. Villa Rica Police Department (VRPD) Detective Chris Rowan led the investigation, which revealed the following:

On November 12, 2022, officers with the Villa Rica Police Department made contact with the occupants of a vehicle, an adult male and a 12-year-old male, parked in a church parking lot after normal hours. The occupants of the car were discussing, and disclosed to the officers, that Defendant Blake Martin had sexually abused the 12-year-old male five years prior in a different county in Georgia. Additionally, officers were told that a 7-year-old female had disclosed earlier that same day that Defendant Martin had been sexually abusing her. The independent statements of the children were mutually corroborating.

VRPD Det. Rowan then initiated an investigation that uncovered years of sexual abuse perpetrated by Defendant Martin against these two children. The Carroll County Child Advocacy Center forensically interviewed the children and Children's Hospital of Atlanta physically examined the 7-year-old. When interviewed by Det. Rowan, Martin denied the allegations.

Martin chose to accept the State's plea offer of 20 years in prison without the possibility of parole rather than proceed to trial, which was scheduled for September 18, 2023. If convicted, he faced a mandatory minimum sentence of 25 years without the possibility of parole and a maximum sentence of life in prison.

In reaching the negotiated plea agreement in this case, the District Attorney's Office sought to balance the goals of securing a conviction for these victims so they can move forward in their lives; obtaining a substantial prison sentence without parole to protect the children of our community; and, if possible, achieving those goals without requiring the child victims to be re-traumatized by testifying in a jury trial. The District Attorney's Office is satisfied that the sentence imposed struck the right balance and makes clear to our community that we are dedicated to obtaining justice for victims of sexual abuse.

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