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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**WILLIAM VINSON, PREVIOUSLY CONVICTED OF RAPE AS A JUVENILE IN 1994, SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON PLUS 20 YEARS FOR AGGRAVATED SEX CRIMES**

On October 30, 2023, William Eric Vinson, 42, of Roopville, pleaded guilty in Carroll County Superior Court to three counts of Aggravated Child Molestation, two counts of Statutory Rape, two counts of Child Molestation, one count of Aggravated Sexual Battery, and one count of Failure to Register as a Sex Offender. Pursuant to a negotiated guilty plea, Judge Dustin Hightower sentenced Vinson to serve life in prison with the possibility of parole followed by a consecutive 19 years in prison and one year of probation, as required by the Georgia's requirement that sex crime sentences include at least one year of probation. This sentence means Vinson is not guaranteed parole and will serve at least 30 years in prison before he becomes eligible for consideration for parole.

Assistant District Attorney Maggie Meetze and District Attorney's Office Investigator Katia Detwiler prosecuted the case with the assistance of Victim Witness Advocate Katelynn Culbreath. Carroll County Sheriff's Office (CCSO) Investigator DeWayne Harmon led the investigation.

This case highlights a few significant criminal justice policies in the State of Georgia, which have received scrutiny over the years: (1) the creation of mandatory minimum sentences without the possibility of parole for aggravated sex crimes like Rape, Aggravated Child Molestation, and Aggravated Sexual Battery, (2) the State's ability to prosecute juveniles in extreme cases as adults for aggravated sex crimes, and (3) the importance of long probationary periods and sex offender registration requirements for offenders convicted of aggravated sex crimes. This case highlights these issues because Vinson was previously convicted of Rape and Aggravated Assault in Carroll County Superior Court Case 94-CR-486, when Vinson was 13 years old. In that case, he was sentenced to 30 years, including prison time, and he remained under probation supervision and sex offender registration requirements when he committed these crimes.

In the 1994 case, the 30 year old victim reported that Vinson knocked on her door, pointed a shotgun at her head, and then raped her in her house. On October 19, 1994, Vinson pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 15 years in prison followed by 15 years on probation. According to the Georgia Department of Corrections, he was released on March 27, 2007, which means he served almost 13 years of his 15 year sentence. He was subsequently convicted of Possession of a Firearm by a Convicted Felon on March 26, 2012, and sentenced to serve three years in prison, for which he was released on September 16, 2013.

In this case, on February 13, 2022, the 12 year old child victim reported to her middle school teacher that William Eric Vinson had sex with her at a residence in Carroll County. CCSO, who investigated the 1994 Rape, also led this investigation. On February 14, 2022, investigators went to the address for which Vinson had registered as a sex offender and could not locate him. The victim was forensically interviewed on February 16, 2022, at the Carroll County Child Advocacy Center and disclosed that Vinson first approached her in April of 2021 when she was 11 years old and made sexually suggestive comments

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Heard County Courthouse  
PO Box 730  
Franklin, GA 30217  
Phone: (706) 675-0955  
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Meriwether County Courthouse  
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Greenville, GA 30222  
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Troup Co. Government Center  
100 Ridley Ave. - Suite 3500  
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about her body. Vinson purchased items for this victim, which is commonly referred to as “grooming” behavior, and exchanged sexually explicit text messages with the victim, which were collected by investigators. Ultimately, the investigation revealed that Vinson sexually abused the victim for a multiple month period in 2021 and threatened to kill himself if the victim ever told anyone.

During the investigation, CCSO investigators determined that Vinson left Carroll County after the victim disclosed Vinson’s sexual abuse and was no longer living at the address where he had registered as a sex offender. Because Georgia’s Sex Offender Registry laws require offenders to update their address within 72 hours of moving, investigators were able to obtain an arrest warrant for violating the Sex Offender Registry laws on March 9, 2022, in addition to obtaining arrest warrants for the sexual abuse of the victim on February 23, 2022. Had the sexual abuse investigation developed more slowly, Georgia’s Sex Offender Registry laws allowed law enforcement to take action to find and arrest Vinson.

While the State’s ability to prosecute juveniles as adults has come under scrutiny, this case shows that the State, through the Coweta Judicial Circuit District Attorney’s Office, was justified in prosecuting Vinson as an adult in 1994 and in obtaining a sentence of 15 years in prison, even though he was 13 years old. For reasons that may be beyond normal human understanding, he is clearly a sexual predator and has been since he was a teenager. Vinson’s cases show that the only way to truly protect victims from serious sexual predators, like Vinson, is to send the offenders to prison. The sentence of life with the possibility of parole followed by 19 years in prison in this case reflects the DA’s Office’s intention to incarcerate Vinson for as long as possible without requiring this child victim to experience the re-traumatization of testifying in a jury trial.

It is also worth noting that when Vinson committed this 2022 crime, he was still under probation supervision from the 1994 case and Georgia law’s sex offender registration requirements. While the registration requirements and probation conditions obviously did not prevent Vinson from committing these crimes, this case shows that long probationary periods and sex offender registration are extremely important to provide our communities with some protection from the most dangerous sex offenders who are released from prison.

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