



# JOHN H. CRANFORD, JR.

DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
COWETA JUDICIAL CIRCUIT

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

February 18, 2024

## **TROUP COUNTY JURY CONVICTS JEROME HUZZIE OF RAPE AND AGGRAVATED CHILD MOLESTATION FOR YEARS OF SEXUAL ABUSE**

On February 15, 2024, a Troup County Jury found Jerome Huzzie, 42, of LaGrange, Georgia, guilty of Rape, Aggravated Child Molestation, and Child Molestation. Superior Court Judge Markette Baker presided over the trial and scheduled sentencing for March 1, 2024 at 1:30 p.m. According to Georgia law, the mandatory minimum sentence for Rape and Aggravated Child Molestation, respectively, is 25 years in prison without the possibility of parole followed by life on probation and registration as a sex offender.

Assistant District Attorney Julia Slater prosecuted the case and former LaGrange Police Department Detective Patrick Tunnell led the investigation. The evidence presented to the jury showed the following:

On May 13, 2021, the victim of these crimes told a friend at school that she had been raped by Jerome Huzzie. This friend took the victim to the counselor at Long Cane Middle School and literally stood by her as she told about the things Jerome Huzzie had done. Counselor Ariel Warner immediately reported the disclosure to LaGrange Police Department and the Department of Family and Children Services. Det. Tunnell was assigned to the case and took the victim to the Troup County Children's Advocacy Center for a forensic interview and sexual assault medical examination.

The forensic interview, conducted by John Harrell, revealed that the victim had been sexually abused by Mr. Huzzie for approximately seven years, since she was six or seven years old. The abuse included forcible rape and oral sodomy. The medical examination, performed by sexual assault nurse examiner Heather Blane, revealed injuries consistent with the victim's disclosures about being raped. Further investigation revealed that during the timeframe of the abuse, the victim exhibited symptoms common to victims of sexual abuse, including suicidal thoughts, nightmares, and self-harm. Prior to telling her friend and the school counselor, the victim told her mother about the molestation but her mother said the defendant would never do something like that and did not seek the assistance of law enforcement.

This case serves as an example of how multiple agencies in our community work together to protect children and hold their abusers accountable. The Troup County School System, LaGrange Police Department, the Department of Family and Children Services, and the Troup County Children's Advocacy Center all did their part to protect this child and find the truth so that this jury could hold this defendant accountable. The two heroes of this story are the victim, who had the courage to tell the truth about what happened to her, and her friend, whose loyalty and support helped this victim come forward to seek justice.

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