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MADISON MAN SENTENCED TO 25 YEARS FOR SEX TRAFFICKING

MADISON, WIS. – Erin J. Graham, 37, of Madison, Wisconsin, was sentenced today to 25 years in federal prison for sex trafficking and transporting individuals across state lines with the intent that they engage in prostitution, announced Scott C. Blader, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin. The sentence was imposed by Chief U.S. District Judge James D. Peterson.

Graham was convicted following a five-day jury trial in Madison in April. The evidence presented at trial established that between 2015 and 2017, Graham engaged in sex trafficking by force, coercion and fraud, and transported individuals across state lines with the intent that they engage in prostitution. Graham posted advertisements on Backpage.com and forced or coerced individuals to commit commercial sex acts with those who responded to the advertisements. In addition, Graham transported two individuals between Wisconsin and Virginia with the intent that they engage in prostitution.

The scheme was uncovered in April 2017 when law enforcement officials encountered one of the victims at a Madison hotel when an employee called 911 after the victim ran from her room bleeding and hid behind the front desk. The victim told a nurse at a Madison hospital that she had been strangled to the point of unconsciousness by Graham when she told him she wanted to leave.

At the trial, four victims testified that they were forced to engage in multiple acts of prostitution and turn over money they earned to Graham and his girlfriend, Patience Moore. The victims testified that they were the only source of income for Graham and Moore. One victim was with Graham and Moore for 18 months, from age 18 to 20. They convinced her that they would help her make money to care for her ill mother, to be able to go to school, and to purchase a car. Instead, testimony at trial showed that Graham was physically abusive to the victim on many occasions and controlled everything from her access to food to when she could speak to her family.

In a written victim impact statement provided to the Court, one of Graham's victims said, "When I realized the truth was to sell my body so that he could have money and never work another day in his life, I didn't feel like a person, and I felt I didn't have value."

Judge Peterson said, "This case was about vulnerable women degraded by a heartless predator." The judge said the lengthy sentence was necessary to make the public safe from Graham's future efforts to exploit women.

"The defendants' actions in using violence, intimidation, coercion, and fear to exploit these young women is abhorrent," said U.S. Attorney Blader. "My office will continue to work with our law enforcement partners to prosecute those who engage in this despicable crime."

"This case shows the level of power and control traffickers have over their victims. This highly successful investigation and prosecution is a clear message to those who engage in sex trafficking in our community -- they will face the combined efforts of local and federal officials to bring them to justice," said Dane County Sheriff David Mahoney, whose agency led the investigation. "This case exemplifies the outstanding working relationship between my office and the U.S. Attorney's Office."

Patience Moore, Graham's co-conspirator, pleaded guilty for her role in this sex trafficking scheme on March 14. She was sentenced on June 18 by Judge Peterson to three years in federal prison on June 18 for her role in this trafficking scheme.

The charges against Graham and Moore are the result of an investigation by the Dane County Sheriff's Office, the Wisconsin Department of Justice Division of Criminal Investigation, with the assistance of the Madison, Grand Chute, Wisconsin State Capitol and Hampton (Virginia) Police Departments. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Julie Pfluger and Kevin Burke prosecuted the case.

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