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PRESS RELEASE

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Jury Trial Verdict On Continuous Child-Sexual Abuse Case: Joe Vanwinkle: BF177533A

Kern County District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer announced a significant jury trial verdict in a major felony case involving sexual abuse of children today. On October 29, 2021, a Kern County jury found Joe Vanwinkle guilty of two felony counts of oral copulation of a child 10 years old or younger, and two counts of lewd or lascivious acts with a child under 14 years old. Vanwinkle committed these crimes against two separate child victims over the span of seven years. This case was prosecuted by DDA Cole Sherman.

From 2007 to 2014, Joe Vanwinkle committed frequent, repeated, and various acts of child molestation against two victims, while they were six to thirteen years old. After suffering in silence for years, the victims reported the abuse to a school counselor who contacted the Kern County Sheriff's Department. A thorough investigation by the Sheriff's Department uncovered social media messages and DNA evidence that corroborated the victims' reports.

District Attorney Cynthia Zimmer commented on the conviction, stating "Children can face undetected abuse at the hands of even their closest family members. When evidence of child abuse is brought to light by counselors, mandatory reporters, or even other family members, law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office are prepared to provide justice for those with the courage and ability to end a cycle of abuse. Sexual abuse can often persist for years before it is brought to light, and for the perpetrators of continuing sexual abuse of children the law demands severe penalties to account for the seriousness of their crimes and the threat faced by more children if such conduct goes unpunished."

The two victims testified in excruciating detail about the sexual abuse inflicted upon them for years by Vanwinkle, in a trial that began on September 7, 2021. Vanwinkle faces up to 55 years to life in prison at his sentencing, currently scheduled for December 1, 2021, before the Honorable Kenneth C. Twisselman.