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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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Prince William County, VA

Prince William County Commonwealth's Attorney Amy Ashworth announces the successful prosecution of Balmore Ortiz Guardado, 36, of Woodbridge, VA, arising from the allegations that the Defendant, a drug dealer, actively recruited and provided illegal substances to include Percocet pills laced with fentanyl, methamphetamines, cocaine, Xanax and alcohol to female victims aged 15-16, facilitating the sexual abuse and rape of the victims, often while they were incapacitated from the drug use or with the threat of a firearm. These acts occurred in late 2021 through 2022. The Defendant was arrested on January 26, 2023.

On January 17, 2024, the Defendant entered a guilty plea to fourteen charges as follows: three (3) counts of Rape, three counts (3) of Object Sexual Penetration, seven (7) counts of Distribution of a Schedule I or II to a Minor, and one (1) count of Possession of Child Pornography. There was no agreement as to the sentence to be imposed and a sentencing hearing to determine the appropriate punishment was held on June 27, 2024. The Defendant was ordered to register with the Virginia Sex Offender and Crimes Against Minors Registry.

Upon hearing the evidence and argument of both sides at the sentencing hearing, the Honorable Kimberly A. Irving sentenced the Defendant to six life sentences plus 215 years of incarceration with 179 years suspended (35 years of mandatory time). The Judge's reasons for departing from the Sentencing Guidelines which recommended a sentence within the range of 35 to 86 years included "the violence of the crimes, the number of victims and the effect [of the crimes] on the victims, the use of a firearm, and the recommendation of the Commonwealth."

Commonwealth's Attorney Amy Ashworth offered the following comment:

"This was a very complex and difficult case as there were so many allegations and very little evidence to corroborate what the victims were telling us occurred due to the late report. However, with the hard work of the police detectives investigating the

case, multiple search warrants, and the digital forensic investigative work, we were able to piece together the evidence and paint the picture of horrific abuse these minors suffered. The Defendant engaged in a pattern of grooming the victims by initially giving them Percocet laced with fentanyl, in exchange for money and gradually escalated to providing drugs for free in order to sexually abuse them. This calculated manipulation demonstrated a clear intent to exploit the vulnerabilities of the victims for his personal satisfaction. It doesn't get much worse. Our hearts go out to these victims and their families who will forever struggle to recover from the pain inflicted by Mr. Ortiz Guardado and we are grateful for the justice we were able to obtain on their behalf.”

The Office of the Commonwealth's Attorney would like to recognize Senior Assistant Commonwealth's Attorney Stephanie K. Buck for her unwavering commitment to this case and these victims; to Kristen Marek, Deputy Director of the Commonwealth's Attorney's Victim/Witness Program, for the assistance and support she provided the victims and their families. We also want to recognize the hard work of the Prince William County Police Department Detectives and Officers who worked on this case, specifically lead Detectives Jason O'Sullivan and Sean Weddel who each played a vital role in the investigation of all of the victims' cases and continued conducting additional investigations as we got closer to trial to strengthen the case which resulted in the guilty pleas. We appreciate the entire Special Victim's Unit of the Prince William County Police Department who did an amazing job investigating such a complex and significant drug and sexual assault case involving multiple juvenile victims as well as Officer Eneix who first discovered the initial drug distribution operation.

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Amy Ashworth is the elected Commonwealth's Attorney for Prince William County and the Cities of Manassas and Manassas Park. She was elected in November 2019 and was re-elected in 2023 for a second four-year term. The Commonwealth Attorney's Office can be reached from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. every business day by phone at 703-792-6050 or email at cwoffice@pwcgov.org.