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Carbon Hill woman sentenced to life in prison after rape of 8-year-old

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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ATHENS, Ohio – Cassie Hanning, 29, of Carbon Hill, was sentenced in Athens County Common Pleas Court on Wednesday to life in prison after she pleaded guilty to allegations of rape of an 8-year-old minor, with whom she had a close relationship, and 43 total charges.

On multiple dates through February, March and April of 2020, Hanning aided and abetted Joshua Weaver, 40, in the sexual abuse of the minor.

Hanning pleaded guilty to and was sentenced on the following counts:

- Rape (F1) — six counts
- Pandering sexually oriented matter involving a minor or impaired person (F2) — 16 counts
- Endangering children (F2) — two counts
- Gross sexual imposition (F3) — five counts
- Gross sexual imposition (F4) — five counts
- Sexual conduct with an animal (M2) — nine counts

Judge Pat Lang sentenced Hanning on one count of rape to life in prison without the possibility of parole until at least 10 years have been served and ordered the remaining counts to run concurrently. If released, Hanning is subject parole sanctions for the rest of her life and she must register as a Tier III sex offender.

Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn said he would file opposition to any attempt of parole for either Hanning or Weaver.

Chief Assistant Prosecutor Liz Pepper told the court that this was one of the most unfortunate cases she has had in her experience, saying that through photographic evidence, witness statements and statements made by the accused themselves, Hanning allowed Weaver to repeatedly violate the victim.

“Never in any point did she take any step in protecting (the victim), Pepper told Judge Lang. “She has not shown remorse and she has not shown an understanding of her role in (the victim’s) abuse.”

Hanning and Weaver later confessed in interviews with Jay Barrett, chief investigator in the Athens County Prosecutor’s Office. In August, Weaver pleaded guilty to similar charges and was sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole until at least 15 years have been served.

“Allegations of sexual assault of any kind are deplorable but when they involve a minor and with Hanning allowing this, taking part and doing nothing to stop it, it becomes truly heinous and tragic,” said Athens County Prosecutor Keller Blackburn. “The work of Chief Investigator Jay Barrett, Chief Assistant Prosecutor Liz Pepper and others involving crimes against minors does not go unnoticed. We will continue to fight for justice for them, even when those close to them do not.”

Harcum House, a child advocacy center in Fairfield County, expressed its “appreciation for the outstanding persistence and dedication” of Pepper and the Athens County Prosecutor’s Office in this case. A statement from the organization said that after meeting officials from Blackburn’s office, “our staff knew that these perpetrators would be held accountable for their actions.”

This case was investigated by the Athens County Sheriff’s Office, Hocking County Sheriff’s Office and Athens County Prosecutor’s Office.

