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PRESS RELEASE

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Attorney General Brown Announces Indictment of Baltimore Woman for Operating Sex Trafficking Ring Throughout Maryland

135-Count Criminal Organization Indictment in Washington County Stems from Two-Year Multi-Agency Investigation Led by AG's Organized Crime Unit

BALTIMORE, MD (June 3, 2024) – Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today announced that Kenika Danielle Leach, 33, of Baltimore, has been indicted by a Washington County grand jury in a 135-count indictment. The charges stem from a two-year multi-agency investigation led by the Attorney General's Organized Crime Unit, which identified at least 11 women from Hagerstown, Maryland, who had been trafficked by Leach and her organization to hotels and motels throughout Maryland for the purposes of performing commercial sex acts. Charges in the indictment include managing a criminal organization and conspiracy to commit sex trafficking by force, threat, coercion, or fraud.

“Sex trafficking is a horrific crime that often preys on people struggling with the disease of drug addiction, exploiting their dependency to coerce and control them,” **said Attorney General Brown**. “The lasting harm to survivors is profound—it’s physically and psychologically traumatic and shatters their sense of security and self-worth. My office is working tirelessly to bring perpetrators to justice, for the safety of the community and so survivors can begin healing and reclaiming their lives.”

In December 2021, the Baltimore Police Department was notified by local hospital personnel that a patient had disclosed being the victim of sex trafficking by Leach. More specifically, the victim told police that Leach had taken her from Hagerstown to the Baltimore area to commit commercial sex acts, for which Leach received money and “compensated” the victim by giving her drugs. Soon thereafter, detectives contacted the Attorney General's Office's Organized Crime Unit, which launched what became a two-year investigation into Leach and her criminal organization, which sometimes advertised itself as the “Pussy Kat Klub.”

By collaborating with partner agencies, including Homeland Security Investigations and Maryland State Police, and reviewing large amounts of cell phone, social media, and financial records, the investigative team identified 10 additional sex trafficking victims who had also been

trafficked by Leach from Hagerstown to hotels in the Baltimore and Anne Arundel County areas for the purpose of performing commercial sex acts.

As alleged in the indictment, knowing that each of the women was actively experiencing drug addiction, Leach exploited their vulnerability by providing drugs to them and then controlling and restricting their access to drugs, in order to coerce them into performing commercial sex acts for her own financial enrichment. By giving the victims drugs, Leach created a dynamic within which the women became indebted to her for a “drug debt,” which they were then forced to repay by engaging in commercial sex acts. The money they earned from these acts would often be paid directly to Leach through the phone application “Cash App.”

The indictment also alleges that Leach used physical violence to coerce and control the women. For example, when Leach intended to physically assault the women as punishment for disobeying her rules, she would order them to “get on the wall” and cover their faces so that she could batter them without impacting their physical appearance. Leach also used intimidation and manipulation to coerce the women to remain obedient and loyal to her.

Leach’s next court appearance is scheduled for June 24, 2024, in Washington County Circuit Court.

“The hard work of BPD detectives, combined with our strong law enforcement partnerships, exhibits once again that we are able to hold criminals to account and bring some closure to our community members,” said **Baltimore Police Commissioner Richard Worley**. “In this case -- through our ongoing, successful collaborations -- we were able to catch a criminal who preyed on vulnerable populations. I hope this indictment brings some peace to all those affected by Kenika Leach’s illicit actions.”

“This collaborative, multi-agency effort highlights our commitment to protect vulnerable individuals and ensure human traffickers are brought to justice,” said **Colonel Roland L. Butler, Jr., Superintendent of the Maryland Department of State Police**. “By leveraging the strengths and resources of local, state and federal law enforcement agencies, we have disrupted a significant human trafficking network in the state and provided vital support to the victims.”

“Although Kenika Danielle Leach will have her day in court, she stands accused of some very serious and disturbing crimes,” said **Special Agent in Charge Michael McCarthy of HSI Baltimore**. “Through her actions, Ms. Leach allegedly victimized at least 11 Maryland residents. Hopefully, this indictment can bring them some comfort in knowing that their alleged predator will be held accountable. HSI Baltimore will continue to work tirelessly with our law enforcement partners to investigate and dismantle human trafficking networks operating throughout the state of Maryland.”

In making today’s announcement, Attorney General Brown thanked Criminal Division Chief Katie Dorian, Organized Crime Unit Chief Paul Halliday, and the men and women of the Baltimore Police Department, Homeland Security Investigations, and the Maryland State Police. Attorney General Brown also thanked Deputy Criminal Division Chief Jared Albert and Assistant Attorney General W. David Wiseman, Jr., who are prosecuting this case, as well as Victim/Witness Program Director Tiffany Bright for her assistance in this investigation.

Attorney General Brown also thanked Anne Arundel County Police Department Chief Amal E. Awad, Baltimore County Police Department Chief Robert O. McCullough, Washington County Sheriff Brian K. Albert, Hagerstown Chief of Police Paul Kifer, State’s Attorney for Anne

Arundel County Anne Colt Leitess, State's Attorney for Baltimore County Scott Shellenberger, and State's Attorney for Washington County Gina Cirincion for their assistance in this investigation.

A criminal indictment is merely an accusation of wrongdoing, and a defendant is presumed innocent until the State proves the defendant guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.

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