

OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT ATTORNEY
BLUE RIDGE JUDICIAL CIRCUIT



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

25 Years in Prison for Man Convicted of Aggravated Child Molestation
State vs. Xavier Matthew Jennings

September 23, 2024 – District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway announces that Xavier Matthew Jennings, 22, has been sentenced to serve 25 years in prison without the possibility of parole, followed by life on probation with sex offender special conditions, for two counts of aggravated child molestation.

A Cherokee County jury convicted Jennings of these charges on August 29 at the conclusion of a three-day trial in Chief Superior Court Judge Ellen McElyea's courtroom. During the trial, seven witnesses testified for the State including a law enforcement officer, an expert in pediatric sexual assault examination, an expert in forensic interviewing, family members, and the victim.

The defendant was charged with these crimes following a Holly Springs Police Department investigation of allegations involving an 8-year-old child, who disclosed the sexual abuse to a grandparent in June 2018.

The victim and the victim's mother attended the September 19 sentencing hearing to speak to the court. In an impact statement read by Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper, the now 14-year-old victim described the crime as "the worst thing to ever happen to me," but asked the court for leniency and expressed a desire for the defendant to accept the wrongfulness of his actions and become a better person.

In her statement, the victim's mother spoke about the long-term impact of Jennings' actions.

"The person sitting in this courtroom today didn't just violate my child's body; he violated my child's spirit. He stole my child's sense of safety and peace. Words can't fully express the depth of pain our family has suffered," the victim's mother said. "I ask the court to give [my child] the justice he deserves."

Because of the severity of the offense, the defendant was charged as an adult for offenses that were committed when he was 16 years old. Based upon the age of the defendant and the input of the victim, the State recommended a sentence of 25 years to serve in prison, followed by life on probation with sex offender special conditions. The punishment range for these offenses under Georgia law is 25 years to life in prison.

"The judicial process is difficult for children to endure, but we are incredibly proud of this victim's resolve," said Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper. "Having the opportunity to amplify his voice and advocate on his behalf through the presentation of evidence in the courtroom is part of our commitment to creating a safer community for children."

Before sentencing the defendant, Chief Judge Ellen McElyea spoke of the victim's courage and bravery and told Jennings that she was taking into account the fact that he was 16 years old at the time of the incident and, for that reason, believes that the state minimum is the appropriate sentence.

She then sentenced the defendant to 25 years to serve in the state prison system followed by life on probation. Jennings will be subject to sex offender special conditions of probation, in addition to general conditions of probation. He is also forbidden to have contact with the named victims.

“The victim was only a young child of 8 years when he came forward to disclose his abuse, and now, at the age of 14, again demonstrated great courage through his testimony to the jury,” said District Attorney Susan K. Treadaway. “We are incredibly inspired by his bravery, and we hope for continued healing and closure.”

The case was investigated by the Holly Springs Police Department and prosecuted by Chief Assistant District Attorney Katie Gropper and Assistant District Attorney Macelyne Williams, of the Office of the District Attorney, Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit.

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The Office of the District Attorney for the Blue Ridge Judicial Circuit is committed to seeking justice, acting with integrity, and collaborating with partner agencies in the criminal justice system in order to protect the citizens of Cherokee County and the State of Georgia.

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