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PRESS RELEASE **CHILD MOLESTER SENTENCED TO LIFE IN PRISON**

Napa County District Attorney Allison Haley announced today:

On September 17, 2021, Gabriel Elena Lopez, aged 36, was sentenced to 104 years to life in State Prison by the Honorable Scott R.L. Young of Napa Superior Court. Additionally, Judge Young awarded \$700,000 in noneconomic damages to the victims and their parents.

On July 8, 2021, a Napa jury convicted defendant of nine criminal charges and eight special allegations. Defendant was found guilty of forcible rape, sexual penetration by a foreign object, forcible oral copulation of a minor, two counts of forcible lewd act upon a child, three counts of lewd act upon a child, and one count of contact with minor for sexual offense. The jury also found true special allegations that the defendant committed a sexual offense against multiple victims after an eight-day jury trial.

The convictions are the result of sexual contact the defendant had with two daughters of a woman he was living with between 2011 and 2014 in Napa County. The survivors were between 7 and 16-years-old at the time of the molestations. The investigation by the Napa Police Department was prompted by a disclosure of sexual abuse to a family member who reported it at a Napa Emergency Women's Shelter. During the jury trial, both survivors, now aged 17 and 23-years-old testified against their abuser.

The case was prosecuted by Napa County Deputy District Attorney Kecia Lind who stated:

"The defendant previously pled no contest to rape and child molest of a victim under 14 years of age and admitted to more than one victim. In 2016, he agreed to and was sentenced to a state prison sentence of 35 years to life. The defendant appealed and asked to withdraw his plea so he could discharge his retained defense counsel with whom he was dissatisfied. The Court of Appeal agreed that his dissatisfaction was reasonable and the case was sent back to Napa Superior Court and the defendant was appointed new counsel. The defendant demanded a jury trial as is his absolute right and this request was honored."

Napa Police Department Detective Todd Shulman led the investigation. Napa County District Attorney Investigator Melissa Kelly assisted in the prosecution. Sexual Assault Victim Services provided advocacy for the survivors.

Any questions regarding this case may be directed to Assistant District Attorney Paul Gero.