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Backpage.com Named in Civil Case For Reportedly Facilitating and Profiting From Child Sex Trafficking

May 17, 2017

Backpage.com is named as a defendant in a civil complaint filed May 17, 2017 in Circuit Court of Cook County of Illinois, which claims the website and others knowingly created an online marketplace to profit from the sex trafficking of children, coached sex traffickers how to develop ads so they can avoid detection by law enforcement, and profited from this activity. The complaint states that Backpage.com knows that its website facilitates child sex trafficking and facilitates this activity, including concealing evidence of criminality by systematically editing its adult ads for minors.

Desiree Robinson was a 16-year-old girl who was murdered in a Markham garage on Christmas Eve 2016. A 32-year-old man is charged with her death and reportedly confessed to police that he had sex with the teenager before killing her. The events that led to Desiree Robinson's death took place because she had become a victim of sex trafficking and was featured in solicitation posts on the controversial website backpage.com. Backpage.com is the subject of a number of investigations around the country for alleged sex trafficking activity. On the night of Desiree Robinson's death, the girl was reportedly brought to meet the defendant by two people who were unknown to her family. The website backpage.com is regarded by the Cook County Sheriff's Anti-Trafficking Task Force as a vehicle for pimps to manipulate young people for money.

"The tragic manipulation, sex trafficking and murder of Desiree Robinson exemplify the horrific abuses taking place on Backpage.com every day. This complaint goes after Backpage.com and others who knowingly encourage and make money off this disgusting activity. We are committed to making sure this egregious behavior stops and that those responsible are brought to justice," said Gina Arquilla DeBoni, Managing Attorney, Romanucci & Blandin, LLC.

"My family can not begin to explain the horror of this situation, knowing that my daughter was victimized by people, a business and a system that destroys young lives. My daughter was a beautiful child, involved in her school and community, and our lives will never be the same without her. This awful system must be stopped so that Desiree's experiences never happen to another young person again," said Yvonne Ambrose, mother of Desiree Robinson.

On May 22, 2017 at Columbia College in Chicago, attorney Gina Arquilla DeBoni will be participating in a panel discussion following a screening of a documentary film, "I Am Jane Doe," which examines the tragedy of child sex trafficking. Yvonne Ambrose and other mothers, whose daughters have fallen prey to sex trafficking, will also be present and make brief remarks. "Our client was inspired to join the other mothers profiled in the new film, I Am Jane Doe, to speak out

for justice,” added Arquilla DeBoni.

“The film follows the journey of several young victims and their families in real time, and includes interviews with US Senators and lawyers, as well as former editors and writers from the Village Voice, ex-CIA analysts, FBI agents, and others involved with these cases. It is a gut-wrenching human story and a fresh look at the social and legal issues surrounding child sex trafficking,” said the film’s writer and director Mary Mazzio. To watch the trailer and learn more information visit: <http://www.iamjanedofilm.com>.

The lawsuit is civil action No: 2017L004979