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NEWS RELEASE

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Life imprisonment sentence upheld for 2017 fatal Wailua traffic collision

LĪHU'E – On Wednesday, Prosecuting Attorney Rebecca Like announced that the Hawai'i Supreme Court denied a petition for review by Cody Safadago, formerly of Washington State. Safadago sought to overturn his convictions, including Manslaughter, Leaving the Scene of an Accident, Unauthorized Control of a Propelled Vehicle, Operating a Vehicle Under the Influence of an Intoxicant, etc. He was convicted of those offenses after a jury trial held before Fifth Circuit Judge Randal G.B. Valenciano in 2019.

On the night of April 27, 2017, while driving a stolen truck on Kūhiō Highway near the intersection of the south end of the Kapa'a Bypass Road, Safadago crossed the center line and crashed head-on with a sedan being driven by 19-year-old Kayla Huddy-Lemn. She died from injuries incurred in the collision. Safadago fled on foot after the collision, and was quickly apprehended by Kaua'i Police Department Officer Michael Buratti. KPD Traffic Safety Unit Officer Shawn Hanna determined that Safadago was traveling at approximately 88 miles per hour when he collided with Ms. Huddy-Lemn's sedan.

After the jury found Safadago guilty, the prosecution sought and received an extended sentence of life imprisonment with the possibility of parole for Safadago's Manslaughter conviction, in addition to other imprisonment terms for his other convictions. He has been in the custody of KPD or the Hawai'i Department of Public Safety since the night of the collision.

In addition to Officer Hanna, the investigation was handled by KPD Traffic Safety Unit Officers Joseph Russell Himongala and Jason Overmyer, and former KPD Criminalist Stephanie Regan. Deputy Prosecuting Attorney H. Ramsey Ross and former Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Sean Van DeMark litigated the trial on behalf of the State of Hawai'i. Deputy Prosecuting Attorney Tracy Murakami handled the appeal.

Prosecuting Attorney Rebecca Like stated, "While there is nothing we can do to undo the harm done by this defendant and the loss suffered by the loved ones of Ms. Huddy-Lemn, we hope that today's decision by the Hawai'i Supreme Court brings some comfort to her family, friends and the Kaua'i community. We are pleased that this individual will remain in prison where he cannot cause further harm."

Ms. Like would like to acknowledge the many witnesses, police and civilian, who testified at this trial; as well as the jurors who served.

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