



# NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release:

### Elkridge Man Sentenced to 42 Years in Prison for Drug Possession and Human Trafficking

Howard County, MD (February 21, 2020) – Ronald Willis Cheek, age 49, was sentenced to a total of 42 years today by Howard County Circuit Court Judge Timothy J. McCrone for two separate cases that occurred in Elkridge, MD in 2019.

On January 21, 2020, Cheek pleaded guilty to two counts of drug possession (one count of fentanyl, one count of cocaine). Then on January 29, 2020, Cheek was convicted by a jury (in a separate case) on four counts of human trafficking. Cheek received one year on each of the drug counts consecutive to each other and 10 years on each of the human trafficking counts consecutive to each other for a total of 42 years.

In sentencing Cheek to the maximum allowed by law, Judge Timothy J. McCrone said, "You deal in the destruction of human beings." McCrone also compared Cheek's behavior to modern day slavery, saying he didn't need chains because he had drugs to control the victims.

#### BACKGROUND ON THE HUMAN TRAFFICKING CASE:

In the late evening on July 10, 2019, Howard County Police received a tip about suspicious activity at the Terrace Motel in the 6200 block of Washington Blvd. Upon arrival, officers discovered four women ranging in age from 20 to 28 in the motel. Cheek was there as well. He was taken into custody on an open arrest warrant for fraud in Virginia. Once inside the rooms that the women stayed in, officers recognized signs of possible human trafficking. The women told police Cheek paid for the room and provided them with food, clothing and drugs. During their investigation, police discovered online prostitution ads with photos of the women. The trafficking victims would respond to the ads and arrange prostitution "dates." The women would then give all the money to Cheek.

Assistant State's Attorney Jennifer W. Ritter prosecuted the case.

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