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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Texas

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Thursday, March 17, 2022

## **Man Sentenced to 10 Years for Offering to ‘Break’ Sex Trafficking Victim**

A 39-year-old man who volunteered to torture a sex trafficking victim for money was sentenced today to 10 years in federal prison, announced U.S. Attorney for the Northern District of Texas Chad E. Meacham.

Billie Joe Sanford, of Eustace, Texas, was charged via criminal complaint in November 2020 and indicted the following month. He pleaded guilty in November 2021 to attempted kidnapping and was sentenced today to 10 years' imprisonment by U.S. District Judge Ada Brown.

According to plea papers, Mr. Sanford admitted that he responded to an online advertisement for a sex trafficking victim who “needs breaking.” Unbeknownst to Mr. Sanford, the ad had been posted by an undercover agent.

“I am willing to help break her into a proper slave,” Mr. Sanford wrote.

In subsequent messages, he asked for \$5,000 a week to brutalize the victim, demanding “complete privacy” without neighbors nearby.

A few weeks later, Mr. Sanford and the undercover agent met in person in Plano, TX.

Posing as the head of a sizable human trafficking ring, the agent told Mr. Sanford he planned to “make a fortune” pimping out the victim, but was concerned by her refusal to engage in commercial sex and her repeated attempts at escape. He stated he had resorted to handcuffing the victim and locking her in a bathroom.

In response, Mr. Sanford bragged that he had “broken” trafficking victims previously and outlined the methods of torture he planned to use: flogging, caging, shock therapy, blaring heavy metal music, whips, and black-out contacts. He explained that while he understood how to cause “excruciating pain,” he would not leave any scars that would affect the victim's later sale.

“You want someone that when it's done, if she gets just a smidgen out of line, then you can say, ‘hey, I'm going to call him back,’” he told the agent. “You want her to believe that whenever she leaves her job, if she

does not report back to you, she is going back to Bill... I just make sure they understand they never want to experience this again.”

A week later, on Nov. 5, Mr. Sanford and the agent met again in Irving, TX. Mr. Sanford agreed to follow the agent to a nearby location, where a second undercover agent, posing as the victim, sat restrained in the back seat of a vehicle.

When he arrived, Mr. Sanford unloaded a suitcase and bag containing leather restraints, flogs, spurs, and other equipment.

In a subsequent interview with law enforcement, Mr. Sanford said he'd been living the “kink” lifestyle for several years. Asked about the victim he'd offered to break, Mr. Sanford stated he was hard up for money and simply wanted to “help her enjoy life.”

“Tragically, all human trafficking victims endure trauma. But the cruelty this defendant was prepared to inflict is almost unthinkable. We are grateful agents were able to apprehend Mr. Sanford before he could get his hands on a living, breathing young woman,” said U.S. Attorney Chad E. Meacham. “The U.S. Attorney's Office, in partnership with HSI, will do everything in its power to end the scourge of human trafficking.”

“This sentence is a result of the investigative efforts of the HSI Dallas led, North Texas Trafficking Task Force that was organized to combat the horrific abuses of human trafficking,” said Christopher Miller, acting Special Agent in Charge HSI Dallas. “We will exhaust all resources to stop the predators who seek to exploit vulnerable individuals through this form of modern-day slavery.”

Homeland Security Investigations' Dallas Field Division conducted the investigation with the assistance of the Dallas County Sheriff's Office, Dallas County District Attorney's Office Investigator, the Fort Worth Police Department, the Colleyville Police Department, and the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission. Assistant U.S. Attorneys Andrew Briggs and Rebekah Ricketts are prosecuting the case.

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**Contact:**

Erin Dooley

Press Officer

214-659-8707

erin.dooley@usdoj.gov

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