

# For Immediate Release

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## Trion Man Convicted of Statutory Rape

**February 28, 2022 – Summerville, GA** – A Trion man was convicted for the July 2019 statutory rape of a 15-year-old girl. With dozens of potential jurors waiting outside the courtroom in Chattooga County Superior Court, Tommy Lee Prince, 36, entered a last-minute guilty plea just prior to jury selection.

“While we were completely ready for trial, the defendant took accountability for his actions and pled guilty,” said Chris Arnt, Lookout Mountain Judicial Circuit District Attorney. “This enabled us to resolve the case without forcing the victim to testify, and we were still able to secure a lengthy prison sentence for this sex offender.”

On Monday, February 21, 2022, Judge Brian House sentenced Prince to a total of 20 years, with the first 10 years to be served in prison. Prince will be required to register annually as a sex offender following his release from prison.

The case was prosecuted by Chief Assistant District Attorney Kevin Baugh. District Attorney Arnt thanked the Trion Police Department and the Children’s Advocacy Center for their excellent work on the case.

The allegations came to light in late July of 2019 after the victim’s cousin discovered inappropriate text messages between the victim and Prince, who had been dating the victim’s aunt at the time of the incident. The case was investigated by Dexter Blackmon with the Trion Police Department. Blackmon immediately scheduled the victim for a forensic interview at the Children’s Advocacy Center, during which the victim disclosed that she and Prince had sexual intercourse. Blackmon obtained a search warrant for the victim’s cell phone, which yielded numerous inappropriate text messages between the victim and Prince as well as an internet search history that corroborated the victim’s disclosure.

The Georgia Bureau of Investigation’s Division of Forensic Sciences analyzed the clothing the victim was wearing on the date of the sexual assault and confirmed through DNA analysis that Prince’s bodily fluids were present. During an interview following his arrest, Prince claimed he had been drinking heavily on the evening in question and attempted to place blame on the victim for flirting with him.

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