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**NEWS RELEASE**

**Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis criminally charged with multiple counts of failing to protect children**

*County Attorney also files civil petitions to ensure justice*

Saint Paul, MN – The Ramsey County Attorney’s Office (RCAO) today filed criminal charges and a civil petition against the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis to hold it criminally accountable for its failure to protect children and seek legal remedies to prevent such failures from ever happening again. These charges are in connection with three separate victims of sexual abuse by former Catholic priest Curtis Wehmeyer.<sup>1</sup>

Statement from Ramsey County Attorney John Choi:

Today, we are alleging a disturbing institutional and systemic pattern of behavior committed by the highest levels of leadership of the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis over the course of decades. By filing criminal charges and taking civil action, we are holding the Archdiocese accountable for its failure to responsibly and meaningfully respond to numerous and repeated reports of troubling conduct by Curtis Wehmeyer, beginning with his entrance into seminary in 1997 and ending with his formal dismissal as a priest in March of 2015. It was not only Curtis Wehmeyer who harmed children, but it was the Archdiocese as well. The Archdiocese’s failures have caused great suffering by the victims and their family and betrayed our entire community - from the many courageous clergy and laypeople whose legitimate concerns about Wehmeyer’s behavior were ignored or minimized to those Catholics and non-Catholics alike who were falsely led to believe that the Archdiocese had effective measures in place to protect children. By taking these actions, we are determined to hold the Archdiocese accountable for its crimes, achieve justice on behalf of the victims and our community, and take all necessary steps to ensure that such failures by the Archdiocese never happen again.

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<sup>1</sup> On November 8, 2012, Curtis Wehmeyer pled guilty in Ramsey County District Court to three felony counts of criminal sexual conduct with two minors and seventeen felony counts of possession of child pornography. On November 7, 2014, the Chippewa County (Wisconsin) District Attorney’s Office charged Curtis Wehmeyer with second degree sexual assault involving a third minor victim. The Wisconsin prosecution is still ongoing.

Today's Criminal and Civil charges specifically seek to hold the Archdiocese accountable for its role in contributing to Curtis Wehmeyer's victims' need for protection or services and their delinquency or status as juvenile petty offenders:

- The criminal charges include three separate counts of Contributing to the Need for Protection or Services ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.425](#)) and three separate counts of Contributing to Status as a Juvenile Petty Offender or Delinquency ([Minn. Stat. § 260B.425](#)).
- The civil petition alleges the Archdiocese contributed to the need for protection or services of children ([Minn. Stat. § 260C.335](#)) related to the same conduct contained in the criminal complaint. The civil petition is brought under legal authority solely vested with a county attorney and is intended to seek legal remedies to prevent the Archdiocese from allowing this behavior to ever happen again.

The actions taken by the County Attorney are the product of an intensive 20-month investigation conducted by investigators from the Saint Paul Police Department (SPPD) and the RCAO that initially began with victims coming forward to police and an investigation into the facts and circumstances surrounding the Archdiocese's report to police on June 20, 2012, concerning the victims of Curtis Wehmeyer. Based upon the facts uncovered in this initial phase of the investigation, a second phase of this investigation was initiated in March of 2014 with a specific focus on the Archdiocese and its handling of Curtis Wehmeyer and concerning information about him. During the second phase, investigators from the SPPD and RCAO interviewed more than 50 witnesses and obtained approximately 170,000 pages of documents from numerous sources. This investigation is still ongoing.

“Our goal throughout the process was to serve as fact finders, and that is exactly what we did. We presented a case—based on facts—that demonstrates our commitment to helping victims and holding the guilty accountable,” Saint Paul Police Chief Thomas Smith. “We will continue to investigate all allegations of misconduct, but we need the public's help. The more people—whether victims, clergy or others—who come forward, the more we can do to protect the vulnerable and the abused.”

It should be noted that a criminal complaint is merely an accusation and that a defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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