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## **NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

January 27, 2022

### **Illinois Man Sentenced for Distributing Drugs in Wisconsin that Linked to Fatal Overdoses**

MADISON, Wis. – Attorney General Josh Kaul today announced that Neko Donovan Forbes, age 31 of Chicago, Ill., has been sentenced to prison for his year-long involvement in importing and distributing large quantities of heroin and fentanyl to central Wisconsin, the use of which resulted in multiple fatal drug overdoses.

“Fentanyl and heroin cause immense harm to the lives of people with substance use disorder,” said Attorney General Kaul. “The Wisconsin Department of Justice and other law enforcement agencies are dedicated to holding to account the drug dealers who sell these and other dangerous drugs.”

According to the criminal complaints, between March of 2019 and January of 2020, Forbes personally imported and delivered hundreds of grams of narcotic drugs from his residence in Illinois to co-conspirators Ashely Stone and Lisa Stone, of Nekoosa, Wis., for distribution in Wood County, Wis. and central Wisconsin. Forbes deliberately cut these narcotic drugs with fentanyl to increase their potency and to increase his profits. In November and December of 2019, three different end users died from fentanyl overdoses from the use of these narcotic substances.

Throughout 2019 and into 2020, Forbes also delivered large quantities of narcotic drugs to other individuals throughout Wood County, Wis. and central Wisconsin. In April of 2020, one of these individuals, a resident of Cranmoor, Wis., died from a fentanyl overdose.

Forbes entered guilty pleas to one count of First Degree Reckless Homicide in connection to the Cranmoor death, Conspiracy to Commit Possession with Intent to

Deliver Heroin Greater than 50 Grams in connection to his activities with Ashely and Lisa Stone, and two separate unrelated counts of Delivery of Heroin. Three additional counts of First Degree Reckless Homicide were read in to be considered by the court at sentencing. On January 13, 2022, Wood County Circuit Court Judge Todd Wolf sentenced Forbes to serve a 30-year prison term, comprised of 18 years of initial confinement and 12 years of extended supervision.

At sentencing, the State argued that Forbes was uniquely culpable for these offenses because the narcotics sold by him - heroin mixed with fentanyl, or pure fentanyl and cutting agent masquerading as heroin – are extremely dangerous. Fentanyl is cheap and up to 100 times more potent than naturally derived opiates such as heroin. A drug trafficker looking to increase his or her profits can use fentanyl to maintain the high level of potency of a given quantity of a narcotic drug while decreasing the actual amount of heroin in it. At sentencing, the State highlighted statements made by Forbes that he deliberately cut his heroin with fentanyl for this very purpose – to increase his profits and make easy money.

Forbes' co-conspirator Ashley Stone pleaded guilty and was sentenced on December 10, 2021 to a total of 14 years of initial confinement and 9 years of extended supervision in connection to these offenses. Ashley's mother Lisa Stone pleaded guilty and was sentenced on December 2, 2021 to a total of 9 years of initial confinement and 10 years of extended supervision.

The investigation was a joint effort between Wisconsin Department of Justice (DOJ) Division of Criminal Investigation (DCI), the Wood County Sheriff's Office, the Portage County Sheriff's Office, the Wisconsin Rapids Police Department, the Nekoosa Police Department, the Stevens Point Police Department, and the Central Wisconsin Drug Task Force.

The prosecution of this case was handled by Assistant Attorney General Cass Cousins and Wood County Assistant District Attorney Nathan Oswald.