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NEWS FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Jury Convicts Semi Driver for Striking School Bus and Injuring Two Dozen Students

MADISON, Wis. – On August 15, 2019, a jury in Columbia County found Wayne E. Murphy guilty of 30 counts of causing injury while operating a motor vehicle while under the influence and causing injury while driving recklessly. In May 2018, Murphy was operating a semi-truck when he struck a school bus that was stopped on the shoulder of the highway. The bus was carrying more than 30 middle school-aged children and chaperones who were on their way to Wisconsin Dells for a field trip. The trial was presided over by Columbia County Judge Troy D. Cross.

“By driving while impaired, this driver caused injury to more than 20 children,” said Attorney General Kaul. “Thanks to the time and effort of the prosecution team, law enforcement, victim-services providers, and the victims and their families, the defendant in this case is being held accountable.”

The evidence presented at trial established that on May 23, 2018, Murphy was operating a semi-tractor and trailer on Interstate 39/90/94 while under the influence of alprazolam and sertraline when he drove into a school bus parked on the shoulder. The Wisconsin State Patrol received a welfare check request from Murphy’s trucking company after other drivers on the road called the company to report that Murphy was “all over the road” just prior to the crash. As a result of the collision, five children suffered great bodily harm, with many more suffering less severe injuries.

The convictions were the result of a joint effort between the Wisconsin State Patrol, the Dane County Sheriff’s Department, the Columbia County District Attorney’s Office, the Columbia County’s Victim Witness Unit, and the Wisconsin State

Laboratory of Hygiene. The prosecution was led by Assistant Attorney General Tara Jenswold and Paralegal Jackie Righter of the DOJ's Criminal Litigation Unit, at the request of the Columbia County District Attorney's Office. Columbia County Assistant District Attorney Jordan Lippert also assisted in the prosecution.

A sentencing hearing has been set for November 4, 2019. The crimes carry a potential maximum period of imprisonment of 145 years.

A copy of the criminal complaint is attached.