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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**ELKTON MAN SENTENCED TO SERVE SIX YEARS IN PRISON  
FOR 2023 FATAL MOTOR VEHICLE COLLISION**

**ELKTON** – On Tuesday, August 19, 2025, Charles R. DeStefano, Jr. of Elkton, was sentenced to serve six years in prison after being found guilty of grossly negligent manslaughter and other related charges in June 2025.

On September 14, 2023, just after 4 p.m., troopers with the Maryland State Police, including an investigator with the Maryland State Police Crash Team, responded to the 1000 block of West Old Philadelphia Road, North East, for the report of a motor vehicle collision involving two vehicles. It was immediately apparent that the driver of the vehicle that was struck, William R. Rupp of Charlestown, was suffering life-threatening injuries. Through the investigation, troopers determined Destefano was traveling eastbound when he crossed the double solid yellow line while attempting to pass four vehicles who were also traveling eastbound. While attempting to pass the vehicles, Destefano entered the westbound lane and struck Rupp's vehicle head on. Airbag module analysis revealed Destefano was traveling at a speed of 66 mph three seconds before the crash. The posted speed limit is 40 mph. Rupp was transported by Maryland State Police Aviation to R. Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center in Baltimore, where he was pronounced deceased.

During the trial, witnesses from the vehicles Destefano attempted to pass testified that the lead vehicle in the row of vehicles was traveling slower than the 40-mph posted speed limit. Witnesses testified that Destefano attempted to pass all four vehicles in an area of the roadway where visibility was reduced because of a hill crest. Witnesses advised they recognized the danger anyone coming over the hill traveling in the westbound lane would face because of Destefano's actions of crossing the double yellow line to pass the eastbound vehicles. One witness testified that prior to the collision they attempted to make space for Destefano to move

back into the eastbound lane as they were approaching the hill, but Destefano failed to get back into the correct lane of travel before striking Rupp's vehicle head on.

Destefano's Maryland Sentencing Guidelines and pre-sentence investigation called for a range of one to six years to serve for the manslaughter charge with the remaining guilty charges merging into the lead one. The maximum sentence for grossly negligent manslaughter by vehicle or vessel carries a maximum sentence of ten years in prison and a fine of up to \$5,000. Assistant State's Attorney E. Ellis Rollins made a recommendation above the guidelines of a period of eight years of active incarceration. He stated that the level of harm could not be more and that the grossly negligent conduct of the Defendant, and the Defendant's conduct alone killed Rupp. The Court also heard from Rupp's wife, who shared that her husband was just months away from retirement and that they were looking forward to the happiest years of their lives and growing old together. Rupp's wife stated, "My husband was the love of my life." She continued to explain that, although she has the love and support of their six children, she feels alone after losing her husband who she described as her best friend. Also present in the courtroom at sentencing were Rupp's children, who provided photographs and letters describing Rupp as a loving family man as well as a dedicated husband, father, and grandfather.

Defense asked the Court to consider less than the State's recommendation and argued the sentence should be within the guidelines. Several members of the Defendant's family as well as the Defendant himself spoke at the sentencing. Destefano apologized to the family for their loss, but as during the trial, he maintained the crash was an accident. During Defense's case, it was maintained that the Defendant was distracted by his phone, which caused him to swerve into the westbound lane to avoid hitting the slower moving vehicle traveling in front of him.

Cecil County Circuit Court Administrative Judge Brenda A. Sexton sentenced Destefano to ten years but suspended four years, resulting in six years in incarceration, which was at the top of the guidelines. Judge Sexton also ordered Destefano to five years of supervised probation after serving his time in prison. In issuing the sentence, Judge Sexton recalled the facts presented during trial to include that Destefano exceeded the speed limit in a rural area with no shoulders on the roadway. Judge Sexton also recalled testimony during trial by stating that Destefano was passing vehicles in a no-passing zone at the crest of a hill with no visibility. Judge Sexton opined from the bench that Destefano's sentence is at the top of the guidelines because of what she described as his egregious conduct.

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