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## **N e w s      R e l e a s e**

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### **Luling Man Facing Lengthy Sentence Following Unanimous Jury Verdict**

Fabian Celestine, 30, was found guilty on March 15, 2016 of violating La. R.S. 14:43.3, Oral Sexual Battery. The verdict was the culmination of a two day trial, prosecuted by Assistant District Attorneys Rochelle Champagne Fahrig and Julie Cullen. The 12 member jury returned the unanimous verdict after less than 25 minutes of deliberation.

Judge M. Lauren Lemmon ordered a pre-sentence investigation in advance of the sentencing set for May 19, 2016. Celestine was charged with violating a particular provision of La. R.S. 14:43.3 which carries an enhanced penalty because the victim was under the age of 13 at the time of the offense. As such, he faces a minimum penalty of 25 years and a maximum penalty of 99 years. Any sentence imposed will be the Louisiana Department of Corrections at hard labor. Celestine who had previously been out on bond, was remanded back into custody of the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office after the Prosecutors moved to increase the bond based upon the verdict and allegations of violation of existing bond conditions. The judge ordered a new bond of \$200,000.

"This verdict was the only one under the circumstances," said District Attorney Joel T. Chaisson II "I can't speak highly enough about the efforts of my lead prosecutor in this case, Rochelle Champagne Fahrig, who worked tirelessly to secure this conviction. I would also like to thank the St. Charles Parish Sheriff's Office, particularly Detective Walter Banks, for their dedication to this case. Although on the morning of the trial the victim in the case recanted her numerous previous consistent statements about what had happened to her, my prosecutors were able to convince the jury that the recantation was simply the result of an extortion of external influence upon the victim to change her story at the last minute. "My office will continue to fight for all victims, especially those who are unable to fight for themselves, and we will not be deterred by any efforts by defendants on their family to circumvent justice."