

# Department of Justice

United States Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr.  
Western District of New York

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## **ROCHESTER MAN AND WOMAN CHARGED IN SEX TRAFFICKING CASE**

ROCHESTER, N.Y.-- U.S. Attorney William J. Hochul, Jr. announced today that Michael Williams, 47, and Chelsea Willenborg, 20, of Rochester, N.Y., were arrested and charged by Criminal Complaint with the sex trafficking of a minor. The charge carries a mandatory minimum penalty of 10 years in prison, a maximum penalty of life, and a fine of \$250,000.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Tiffany H. Lee, who is handling the case, stated that according to the Complaint, on February 8, 2012, Rochester Police responded to a city residence to investigate a report that a 16-year-old-female was missing, being held against her will and being forced to perform sexual acts. A family member had seen an internet advertisement with the victim's picture and had tried to contact the number listed on the website to speak with the victim. The investigation led to a residence on Caroline Street in Rochester where Chelsea Willenborg resided. While at the residence, investigators observed a laptop computer that appeared to show a backpage.com conversation regarding a meeting that was being arranged at a hotel on Jefferson Ave. Investigators went to the hotel where they found the victim, along with Willenborg.

According to the complaint, the victim indicated that she was taken to the Caroline Street address by Michael Williams and that she had told both Williams and Willenborg that she was 16 years old. The complaint further alleges that, soon after arriving, Williams and Willenborg took pictures of the victim which they uploaded onto the website, "backpage.com." Men began to respond to the ads and the victim was told to meet up with the men by the defendants. The victim told investigators that the money she received after meeting the men and performing sexual acts would then be given to Willenborg, who in turn, gave the money to Williams.

Both Willenborg and Williams face New York State sex trafficking charges in

Monroe County.

“Human trafficking on any level is aggressively investigated and prosecuted by this Office,” said U.S. Attorney Hochul. “This case is particularly troubling because it involves allegations that a minor was held against her will and forced into prostitution. The one promise we in law enforcement make is that anyone engaged in similar behavior will be tracked down and brought to justice.”

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice. Led by United States Attorneys’ Offices and the Criminal Division’s Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section (CEOS), Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state and local resources to better locate, apprehend and prosecute individuals who exploit children via the Internet, as well as to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit [www.projectsafechildhood.gov](http://www.projectsafechildhood.gov).

The Criminal Complaint is the culmination of an investigation on the part of the FBI’s Cyber Crimes Task Force, which includes the Monroe County Sheriff’s Office, under the direction of Sheriff Patrick O’Flynn, the Rochester Police Department under the direction of Chief James Sheppard, and Special Agents of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, under the direction of Christopher M. Piehota, Special Agent in Charge, and the Monroe County District Attorney’s Office under the direction of Sandra Doorley.

The fact that a defendant has been charged with a crime is merely an accusation and the defendant is presumed innocent until and unless proven guilty.

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