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**\*\*\*MEDIA ALERT\*\*\***

**For Immediate Release**

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## **JURY FINDS DEFENDANT AMY WORD GUILTY**

Evansville, IN – Prosecutor Diana Moers announces that on June 28, 2024, after a 3-day jury trial in Sullivan, IN, a jury found Defendant Amy Word guilty of Maintaining a Common Nuisance, a Level 6 Felony. Deputy Prosecutor James Doyle represented the State in this case, with assistance from Deputy Prosecutor Owen Gogarty. The Honorable Judge David D. Kiely of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court presided.

Over a 7-month period, from January of 2022 to July 30, 2022, various cocaine dealers routinely sold cocaine to the Defendant, Amy S. Word, her employees, and some patrons, from the parking lot of Lamasco and inside the bathrooms of Lamasco- owned at the time by the Defendant, Amy Word. Detectives were notified of a “bathroom business” inside Lamasco where employees and patrons alike would distribute and use controlled substances, mainly cocaine, marijuana, and pills.

In 2021, the Evansville Police Department seized over 30 grams of cocaine from an individual who stated they bought it just outside the back door of Lamasco. This individual told Detectives it was common knowledge that Lamasco Bar & Grill was the place to purchase drugs. In January of 2022, Detectives Knight and King began surveying Lamasco Bar witnessing several transactions between employees and dealers.

In March of 2022, cocaine and fentanyl were seized from a Lamasco employee. Soon after, 5 confidential informants all made similar statements to Detectives that it was common knowledge that illegal drugs were sold on Franklin Street and Lamasco Bar. They also told Detectives about the “bathroom business”. One of the informants stated they had been invited to a private party at Amy Word’s residence where Word and the drug dealers she associated with were using cocaine. All 5 confidential informants stated separately that the Defendant, Amy Word, knew about the distribution and use of these controlled substances. One informant also stated that Word would regularly take money from Lamasco’s petty cash fund to purchase cocaine for the employees who stayed after close.

Later in 2022, the Evansville Vanderburgh County Drug Task Force conducted controlled buys on several dealers in the parking lot of Lamasco. This investigation led to over 20 arrests for various narcotics related charges. Detectives Knight, King, and Watson had observed daily drug deals inside and near Lamasco, and Amy Word was often present when the deals took place.

One of the regular dealers testified at this week's trial stating he has sold cocaine directly to Amy Word and had sold it at Lamasco Bar & Grill. The State also presented law enforcement testimony, video surveillance footage and cell phone evidence from the Defendant's phone to the jury. After short deliberation, the Sullivan County jury found Amy Word guilty as charged.

Vanderburgh County Prosecutor Moers stated: "The Defendant, Amy Word, who is still an inactive member of our school board, allowed drug dealers and users alike to proliferate cocaine into the community of Evansville through her bar. But no more. The Defendant's businesses are no longer in operation, and she will no longer be eligible to serve on the school board as a convicted felon. While the Defendant attempted to try her case in the media, the truth was laid out this week by the State in the appropriate venue in front of the jury in court. The jury concluded what law enforcement knew all along: Word was guilty as charged. The evidence and testimony against her were overwhelming."

Deputy Prosecutor James Doyle stated: "You are the company you keep, and Amy Word's company—her friends—were three cocaine dealers who testified at trial that they sold cocaine at Lamasco. This testimony was consistent amongst all witnesses and corroborated the video surveillance, Detective testimony, and cell phone evidence from the Defendant's phone."

Prosecutor Moers went on to state: "The Defendant had the potential to make a positive contribution to our community but instead chose drugs and all the crime, violence, and destruction these illegal substances bring to our community, families, and the very children she was charged with helping while sitting on the school board."

Prosecutor Moers continued: "I want to thank the efforts of the many Detectives in the Evansville Police Department Joint Task Force, particularly Detective Matthew Knight and my Deputy Prosecutor James Doyle. DPA Doyle has numerous years of subject matter expertise in drug cases and is my go-to Deputy Prosecutor on the topic. Together, this team was able to lay the facts before the jury who swiftly reached a verdict of guilty."

Prosecutor Moers thanks her support staff including Morgan Richardville, Jennifer Savage, and Investigators Jon Carter and Gage Shots who assisted with the successful Prosecution of this case.

Sentencing is scheduled for August 5, 2024, in front of the Honorable Judge David D. Kiely of the Vanderburgh County Circuit Court.

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