

## **Sex offender's sentence stands after appeals court ruling**

The 11<sup>th</sup> District Court of Appeals on Tuesday, June 20, 2023, upheld the convictions of Elijah D. Peters, who had appealed the ruling of a Trumbull County Common Pleas judge who found him competent to stand trial on sex charges.



Peters, 21, formerly of Thompson-Sharpsville Road, on July 21, 2022 had pleaded guilty to unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, two counts of gross sexual imposition, two counts of rape and one count disseminating matter harmful to juveniles. He was sentenced by Judge Ronald J. Rice to an indefinite prison term of 10 to 15 years.

Peters, who is now incarcerated at Belmont Correctional Institution, was convicted of engaging in sexual conduct with two minor victims and sending nude pictures of himself to a third minor.

After his sentencing hearing in September 2022, Peters appealed to the 11<sup>th</sup> District Court claiming the trial court erred in finding him competent to stand trial saying such finding was against the manifest weight of the evidence.

However, 11<sup>th</sup> District Judges Matt Lynch, John Eklund and Eugene A. Lucci found there was reliable, credible evidence to support the competency finding. The appellate court cited the testimony of Przemyslaw Kapalczynski, a staff psychiatrist at Heartland Behavioral Healthcare, who had treated Peters for over four months since his admission to the Massillon facility on Dec. 9, 2021. The doctor told the trial court he believed Peters could assist in his own defense at trial, including testifying competently.

Arguing the case in appeal for the state was Assistant Prosecutor Ryan Sanders of the Trumbull County Prosecutor's office. The defense attorney was Michael A. Partlow of Stow.

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