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NEWS RELEASE –

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With Sentencing of Leland Pankey Denver Closes a Dark Chapter

DENVER—Leland Pankey (age 40), the biological father of deceased seven-year old Caden McWilliams, was sentenced today to the maximum sentence of 72 years by District Court Judge A. Bruce Jones. The sentence reflects that Pankey’s offenses were intentional, deliberate, calculated, callous, self-serving and depraved of any sense of humanity or human kindness. The seriousness of his offenses – child abuse resulting in death and tampering with a deceased human body - shock the conscience and are incomprehensible to the people of Denver.

In response to the sentencing and conclusion of the case, Denver District Attorney Beth McCann issued the below statement.

“By all accounts, seven-year old Caden McWilliams had an inner light, a heart of gold, a contagious giggle, and a cascade of curls. Caden was loved by his family for his old soul and sweet and gentle nature and by his classmates for being a caring boy who was extremely popular and who loved dinosaurs. Caden loved to tinker and figure out how things worked and his family believes he would likely have been an engineer if he was given the chance to reach adulthood.

Caden’s family members believe that his spirit lives on and watches over them. They have collectively decided that the red-tailed hawk represents the elegance of Caden and they will forever be reminded of him by the sight of a hawk. My hope is that the hawk becomes a symbol for all Denverites and that whenever we see a hawk soaring, we will all take a moment to think of Caden and in that moment remember to be kind to one another.

I again thank the Aurora and Denver Police Departments for their dogged and excellent investigative work and members of my office for finding the courage and professionalism to see this case through to conclusion.”