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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Recently Filed Lawsuit Alleging Exorbitant Fee Scheme

Evansville, IN – Today, a lawsuit was filed against Vanderburgh County, Judge Kiely, and ABK Tracking, Inc., that seeks to help thousands of people who are being charged exorbitant pre-trial and post sentencing fees in exchange for their freedom. In Vanderburgh County, ABK Tracking, Inc., maintains exclusive, for-profit control over electronic monitoring and drug/alcohol testing for persons charged with a crime. That control means ABK is allowed to set fees for individuals without consideration into their ability to pay. If people cannot afford to pay their fees, they risk going back to jail.

Vanderburgh County, by and through ABK Tracking, criminalizes poverty in exchange for dollars. This pay-or-jail scheme can mean up to \$300 for a “set up fee” plus an ongoing \$112 weekly “supervision fee” and an addition \$35 per drug test, which Defendants can be required to submit to multiple times per week. If these fees are not paid, ABK Officers can threaten to have them sent back to jail. Defendants commonly forego paying rent, utility bills, groceries, and other necessities to avoid being behind bars. ABK, whose primary task is to collect fees and administer tests, uses those same fees to pay wages and earn profits. This creates a conflict of interest where a private organization retains exclusive control over a person’s freedom.

Our lawsuit was filed this afternoon by nonprofit organization Equal Justice Under Law out of Washington D.C., and Schnepper Law, LLC. I want to emphasize most importantly that this can’t be the way our system works. Pay-or-jail schemes shouldn’t be the norm throughout the country and it’s disheartening to have it in our community. People are being punished for being poor. I am hopeful this lawsuit will bring recognition and understanding to the problem.

Sincerely,

Jeremy W. Schnepper