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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

EMILY LASTER ARRESTED ON FELONY EWOC CHARGES RELATED TO ABUSE OF HER 5-YEAR-OLD SON BY STEVEN DOUGHERTY; DOUGHERTY'S BAIL WAS REVOKED IN HEARING TODAY



EMILY LASTER

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (July 25, 2022) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Lower Pottsgrove Township Police Chief Richard Bell announce the arrest of Emily Laster, 30, of Sanatoga, related to the physical abuse of her 5-year-old son by her former boyfriend Steven Dougherty of Collingdale. Felony charges against Laster were filed on July 18, 2022, when she was out of state, and an arrest warrant was issued. Laster returned today to Montgomery County and turned herself into law enforcement.

The abuse was reported to the Montgomery County Detective Bureau on Nov. 19, 2021, after the 5-year-old boy was hospitalized at the Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP). An examination by CHOP child abuse experts found injuries to the boy's penis and scrotum; significant bruising and abrasions on the boy's abdomen, chest, eyelids, arms and legs; and multiple bilateral rib fractures involving 14 ribs.

The ensuing joint investigation by Montgomery County Detectives and Lower Pottsgrove Police found that the physical abuse to the boy occurred over a period of months at the hands of defendant Dougherty, who was arrested on July 20, 2022, on charges of Aggravated Assault of a Child Under 6, Endangering the Welfare of a Child, Simple Assault and Recklessly Endangering Another Person. He was arraigned

before Magisterial District Judge Albert J. Augustine, who set bail at \$10,000, 10 percent. The defendant posted \$1,000 bail and was released.

The Commonwealth had argued at the arraignment for \$250,000 cash bail, then requested a bail review hearing as part of the PreTrials Services Program but was denied. The Commonwealth filed a motion requesting an emergency bail hearing, which was held this morning, July 25, 2021, before Court of Commons Pleas Judge Virgil B. Walker. Judge Walker revoked Dougherty's bail, and he was immediately taken into custody by Montgomery County Sheriffs. A preliminary hearing is scheduled for 10 a.m., Aug. 9, 2022, before Magisterial District Judge Edward C. Kropp Sr.

"Judge Walker heard the disturbing evidence in this case, as well as heard our argument that defendant Dougherty posed a danger to the victim and the community," said DA Steele. "The defendant is now behind bars awaiting trial."

Laster was charged with a first-degree felony Endangering the Welfare of a Child/Violate Duty of Care (under 6 years old) and first-degree misdemeanor Endangering the Welfare of a Child after the investigation found that while Laster had not caused the actual physical harm, she had a duty of care as a mother to protect her 5-year-old son, yet she continued to leave her son in Dougherty's sole care. Laster will be arraigned today on the charges and a preliminary hearing will be scheduled.

Since the boy's release from CHOP on Nov. 23, 2021, he has been living with relatives and has not seen his mother or defendant Dougherty as part of safety plan implemented by the Montgomery County Office of Children and Youth.

The case is being prosecuted by Assistant Chief of Trials Lauren Marvel, who oversees the Family Protection Unit, and Assistant District Attorney Katie Kopecki.

Approved for release:

Kevin R. Steele

CRIMINAL CHARGES, AND ANY DISCUSSION THEREOF, ARE MERELY ALLEGATIONS AND ALL DEFENDANTS ARE PRESUMED INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.