



Jim Hood's Child Desertion Unit indicted ex-wife of Oxycontin rep while child was living with her for nine months.

Jim Hood's job as Mississippi's Attorney General comes with enormous responsibility and equally enormous power. However, he misused that power and almost ruined a mother and her minor child's life by allowing his Child Desertion Unit to pursue the indictment and prosecution of the mother, who was the sole custodial parent of her child and received no child support from the father at the time of the indictment. Jim Hood's office did so without ever conducting an adequate investigation.

Instead, Hood relied on an intake form filed with the Child Desertion Unit by the woman's ex-husband, Michael Warren, who was then an Oxycontin sales representative.

At the time of Ms. Warren's indictment, Jim Hood's office was pursuing litigation in a highly publicized case against Purdue Pharma and other opioid manufacturers. The 247-page complaint charged the companies with violating the state Medicaid Fraud Control Act and its Consumer Protection Act, and also said their sales representatives committed fraud and negligent

misrepresentation by understating Oxycontin's addictive properties. The complaint also included charges of unjust enrichment and public nuisance.

It is unclear if Hood's office consulted Mr. Warren regarding the litigation or planned to use him as a witness in the case. However, the timing of certain events in Ms. Warren's case and the opioid litigation case could not be much closer:

- Warren submitted his intake form December 10, 2015.
- Attorney General Hood filed the state's lawsuit against Purdue Pharma, Warren's employer, and other opioid manufacturers in Hinds County Chancery Court December 15, 2015.
- In May 2017, a three-judge panel granted the drug makers additional time to prepare an appeal of a previous decision rejecting their request to change the venue from Hinds County to Rankin County.
- Ms. Warren's indictment was returned by the grand jury on June 19th, 2017.
- A week earlier, on June 12, 2017, Jim Hood was quoted in a Clarion Ledger article about the opioid litigation; the article stated that the Mississippi Supreme Court was expected to hear arguments from the drug makers to dismiss the case or move it to Rankin County.

Hood was quoted by the Clarion Ledger as having written:

"For over two decades, these pharmaceutical companies have made billions of dollars in profits by misrepresenting to tens of millions of doctors and patients the significant dangers of prescription opioids – marketing the drug as rarely addictive and a safe substitute for non addictive pain medications, such as ibuprofen or naproxen."

In pursuing the indictment of Ms. Warren, the Child Desertion Unit of Jim Hood's office certainly seems to have operated in violation of its own rules as printed in its literature, which

states:l

“THE CHILD DESERTION UNIT IS DEDICATED TO THE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION OF DELINQUENT CHILD SUPPORT CASES, ADDRESSING THE CHRONIC AND PERSISTENT ISSUE OF PARENTS NOT PROVIDING EMOTIONAL AND MONETARY SUPPORT FOR THEIR CHILDREN.”

The Child Desertion Unit pursued the indictment of Mrs. Warren in May 2016 for \$11,315.98 in back child support under the false representation to the Grand Jury that Ms. Warren had abandoned her child . However, the unit’s literature cites its own protocol that, before proceeding with legal action, certain criteria must be met. For example, the unit must establish that the

Non-Custodial Parent has the Ability to pay but simply refuses.

Also, the unit must be certain that the non-custodial parent’s *employment IS verified.*

The Child Desertion Unit’s normal rules and procedures were not adequately followed, however.

In July and August of 2016, Ms. Warren completed a 35-day in-patient treatment program in Florida for opioid addiction, which, she told HPNM, began with her first prescription for Oxycontin. She was working the out-patient program in Louisiana and had found a job by December 2016 when her ex-husband, Michael Warren, asked her to take custody of their minor child. Ms. Warren gave up her new job and moved back to Hattiesburg to take custody of her minor child, thus allowing her daughter to continue attending her regular school. During that time, Michael Warren ceased tuition payments for the child’s private education, leaving Ms. Warren to scramble for

resources to keep the child in the school she had always attended.

Nine months later, Ms. Warren was indicted by Jim Hood's Child Desertion Unit at the prior request and urging of Michael Warren. At the time of the indictment, Ms. Warren was the sole custodial parent for her child. She was not gainfully employed after she took custody of her minor child in early December, 2016.

Based on the above-mentioned facts, it is clear that Ms. Warren did not meet the Child Desertion Unit's criteria. By recklessly abandoning due diligence, the Office of the Attorney General not only violated its own rules, but also caused immeasurable harm to the custodial mother and her child. Had the unit investigators made a single phone call, either to Michael Warren or his ex-wife, performed a welfare check of the child, or bothered to call Michael Warren as a witness before the grand jury, this travesty of justice never would have taken place. Instead, Jim Hood's office relied on inaccurate information that was 17 months old and proceeded with reckless abandon to gain an indictment. In doing so, it violated its own rules and requirements.

Mr. Hood, in his quest to seek maximum publicity for the indictment, issued a press release regarding Ms. Warren's arrest, which occurred during Childhood Support Awareness Month. Ms. Warren's mugshot was sent with Jim Hood's press release; both were distributed to and subsequently published in numerous major media outlets across the southeast, including the front page of the Clarion Ledger, The Hattiesburg American, the Mississippi section of the Washington Post, WDAM news, WLOX, and others. This massive exposure of Ms. Warren's arrest compounded her pain and suffering and that of her child. It brought enormous embarrassment to both and made it nearly impossible for Ms. Warren to secure and maintain meaningful, lasting employment to support herself and her daughter. Ms. Warren was shattered

emotionally and devastated financially. At the time, she had no financial means to fight against the full weight and power of the Mississippi Attorney General's reckless and irresponsible indictment.

Hattiesburg Patriot News Media (HPNM) sought a comment from the Mississippi Department of Human Services, which normally handles back child support prosecutions, but only when they exceed \$20,000. The department told HPNM,

"MDHS did not conduct a criminal INVESTIGATION against Ms. Warren. Our records INDICATE that the AG's Child Desertion Unit filed criminal actions against Ms. Warren at the request of her ex-husband."

Desperate, depressed and broken, Ms. Warren was saved by her friends, who helped secure counsel to represent her in Forrest County Chancery Court to secure child support from her ex-husband and to remedy the careless and reckless actions of Jim Hood's office. Court documents obtained by Hattiesburg Patriot News Media reveal that Warren not only was employed as a sales representative for Purdue Pharmaceuticals but also owns JMW Enterprises, which offers portable x-rays for asbestos victims. In 2017, during Ms. Warren's actions against her ex-husband, Mr. Warren's income was declared in court filings as \$388,000 per year.

On his intake form with the Attorney General's Child Desertion Unit, Warren explained the purported burden he and his fiancée (now wife), Kerrie Schwabe Bermond Warren, were under when he stated that he,

"Borrowed monies from fiancée"

and he suffered

"emotional stress on me as a male."

Warren went on to say

“I have seen \$800 – \$1000 owed child support resulted in incarceration – this is frustrating and provides stress on my family.”

Warren succeeded initially in his apparent mission to have his ex-wife jailed, but justice was found in a Forrest County Court 14 months later. In February 2018, Ms. Warren sued her ex-husband in Chancery Court for child support, which she had not received since she took custody of their child in early December of 2016.

After hearing the facts of the case, Judge Johnny Williams ordered Michael Warren to pay \$1,800.00 per month in support, but it didn't end there. In the order Judge Williams stipulated that Warren was to pay \$1,800 per month in back child support for the 14 months (since December 2016) that his ex-wife had custody of their child. That retroactive support wiped out Ms. Warren's \$11,315.80 in back support and created back child support in the amount of \$13,984.02 owed by Warren, which he agreed to pay at \$200.00 per month (transcripts below article). With the back support payments, and the current ordered support, this brought the monthly total Warren owed his ex-wife to \$2,000.00.

It doesn't end there. Warren has failed to meet his child support obligations since that February 12th, 2018 order, and is now just over \$28,000 in arrears in child support . A motion for contempt was filed by Ms. Warren's attorney, and a hearing for failure to pay child support is scheduled for 9 a.m. on October 29th, 2019 at the Chancery Courthouse in Columbia. Hattiesburg Patriot News Media will be there to provide a follow-up report.

Hattiesburg Patriot News Media requested a comment from Jim Hood's office. The comment is below and contains two false statements (highlighted in blue). Hood's comment reads,

*“Our Child Desertion Unit received an **intake form** from John Michael Warren in December 2015 along with supporting documents. Our investigation of this matter showed that (first name redacted by HPNM) Warren was delinquent in child support by \$11,315.98 for approximately eight years. This case was presented to a Lamar County Grand Jury at the May 2017 term resulting in her **indictment** on June 19, 2017, for one felony count of non-support of a child. At the time of (FIRST NAME REDACTED BY HPNM) Warren’s indictment, the child was living with her. However, an **order** filed in the Forrest County Chancery Court in February 2018, stated neither party called the change in residence of the minor to the Court’s attention, nor to the attention of the Attorney General’s Office, and **no change in the child’s living arrangements or child support was ordered. Even after the change in custody, (FIRST NAME REDACTED BY HPNM) Warren was still delinquent on her child support. Following the order filed in February 2018, our office petitioned the court which granted such remand on March 9, 2018.**”*

In fact, the **ORDER** (embedded below) contradicts the statement from Jim Hood’s office in Paragraph I. The Order reads,

“Husband Shall Pay to wife for the fourteen months beginning December, 2016, the sum of \$1,800 per month and that husband shall be given credit for the \$11,315.98 that wife is in arrears, leaving husband in debt to wife in the amount of \$13,984.02. The sum of \$13,984.02. shall be repaid by husband to wife at the rate of \$200.00 per month beginning February 1, 2018, and the COurt specifically adjudicates that wife does not owe any back child support to husband.

After the February 12th, 2018 order, Ms. Warren’s attorney asked Jim Hood’s office to drop the charges. Hood’s office remanded the case to files and stated,

“the state is unable at this time to prove beyond a

reasonable doubt that the defendant committed the crime of non support of the child”

Ms. Warren’s arrest remains on her record. She lacks the financial means to have the arrest expunged, since she has not received the court-ordered support from her ex-husband, Michael Warren, and all of her hourly wages go to supporting herself and her daughter.

(To our readers, feel welcome to post a link to this story to Jim Hood’s campaign page in the comments. You can also call Jim Hood at the Office of the Mississippi Attorney General to demand a public apology to Ms. Warren and her child. That number is 601-359-3680) Please share this post on Facebook.

All documents used for this article are below. Jim Hood was questioned about this matter at the post-debate press gathering at USM Hood. Mr. Hood cut off the questions and attempted to downgrade the reporter as just a “blogger.”

[hood-docs](#)