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**DOJ EMPLOYEE PLEADS GUILTY TO TRAVELING TO ENGAGE IN SEX WITH A
MINOR**

Baltimore, Maryland –James Cicala, age 55, of Columbia, Maryland pleaded guilty today to interstate travel with intent to engage in a sexual act with a minor.

The guilty plea was announced by United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Rod J. Rosenstein; Special Agent in Charge Andre R. Watson of U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s (ICE) Homeland Security Investigations (HSI); Worcester County Sheriff Reggie T. Mason, Sr.; and Special Agent in Charge Michael Tompkins, Washington Field Office, U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General.

According to his plea agreement, Cicala was a career employee at the U.S. Department of Justice, providing information technology support. Cicala owned a beach house in Fenwick Island, Delaware. From March 2015 through at least July 21, 2015, Cicala placed multiple ads in the Delaware, Maryland and District of Columbia editions of an online marketplace, seeking females to engage in “daddy-daughter” relationships. On July 21, 2015, an undercover detective with the Worcester County Sheriff’s Office who was investigating child solicitation on the internet responded to Cicala’s ad entitled “Daddy’s Little Girl.” The undercover detective identified himself as “Sydney,” a 15 year old female, and Cicala identified himself as a male in his late 40’s.

Cicala and the undercover detective posing as “Sydney” exchanged messages for several weeks, eventually agreeing to meet to engage in sexually explicit conduct. During their conversations, Cicala referred to himself as “Daddy.” Cicala promised to take “Sydney” on a shopping trip and to bring a pair of earrings which “Sydney” had picked out at Cicala’s request. According to the plea agreement, the meeting was initially scheduled for August 1, 2015. On August 1, 2015, Cicala traveled from his beach house in Delaware to Berlin, Maryland, to meet “Sydney,” who did not show up, later claiming that she was with her Aunt and was unable to get away.

The texting continued and Cicala again made arrangements to meet Sydney on August 15, 2015, in Berlin. Many of the conversations Cicala had with the undercover officer occurred using Cicala’s DOJ-issued phone or work computer, sometimes during work hours. Cicala frequently attempted to engage “Sydney” in sexually explicit chat, instructing her to delete the message, and sent Sydney nude and partially nude photos of himself. However, throughout the text message exchanges “Sydney” refused to send sexually explicit photos or engage in sexually explicit chat.

On August 15, 2015, Cicala traveled from his beach house in Delaware to Berlin, Maryland, to engage in sexual activity with “Sydney,” whom he believed to be a 15 year old girl. He was arrested as he arrived at the meeting place. He had his DOJ issued cell phone, which he had used for sending and receiving the texts with “Sydney.” In his SUV was bedding, pillows, a giftwrapped box with the promised earrings, and cell phone batteries for the phone “Sydney” has told him she used. On August 17, 2015, Cicala was placed on administrative leave by the Department of Justice.

Cicala faces a maximum of 30 years in prison followed by up to lifetime of supervised release for traveling interstate to have sex with a minor. U.S. District Judge Ellen L. Hollander scheduled sentencing for August 25, 2016, at 10:00 a.m.

This case was brought as part of Project Safe Childhood, a nationwide initiative launched in May 2006 by the Department of Justice to combat the growing epidemic of child sexual exploitation and abuse. Led by the United States Attorneys' Offices and the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section, Project Safe Childhood marshals federal, state, and local resources to locate, apprehend, and prosecute individuals who sexually exploit children, and to identify and rescue victims. For more information about Project Safe Childhood, please visit www.justice.gov/psc. For more information about internet safety education, please visit www.justice.gov/psc and click on the "resources" tab on the left of the page.

United States Attorney Rod J. Rosenstein commended the HSI Baltimore, Worcester County Sheriff's Office and DOJ Office of Inspector General for their work in the investigation. Mr. Rosenstein thanked Assistant U.S. Attorney Tamera L. Fine, who is prosecuting the case.