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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: July 20, 2021
Re: William Beck Usilton III
Voluntary Manslaughter Conviction

For More Information Contact:

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that William Beck Usilton III, age 30, of Oakdale, was convicted on July 16, 2021 by a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury of voluntary manslaughter and personal use of a firearm. Deputy District Attorney Tracy Griffin prosecuted the case for the People.

On February 10, 2019, at approximately 2:30 a.m., Oakdale Police officers responded to the report of a person shot inside an apartment at the Bonnie Villa Apartments. Upon arrival, four witnesses told officers that Usilton was the shooter. After clearing the apartment and detaining Usilton, officers found 25-year-old Cody Sorensen with a gunshot wound to his face. Witnesses told officers that Usilton and Sorensen had been at the H-B Saloon together earlier that evening, but after returning to the apartment, an argument occurred during which Usilton grabbed a handgun, chambered a round and shot Sorensen in the face. Paramedics pronounced Sorensen dead at the scene.

Usilton told officers that Sorensen was an “uninvited guest” and that Usilton’s girlfriend had let Sorensen in to retrieve some belongings from inside the apartment. During the jury trial, Usilton claimed he shot Sorensen in self-defense, but was unable to identify how Sorensen posed a reasonable threat of death or great bodily injury that justified the shooting.

After a two-week trial presided over by Judge Linda McFadden, the jury returned a verdict convicting Usilton of voluntary manslaughter along with an enhancement for using a firearm during the commission of the offense.

Victim impact statements and sentencing are currently set for September 20, 2021 before Judge McFadden. Usilton faces a potential maximum sentence of 21 years in state prison.

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