



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

For Release: May 15, 2015

Contact: Sherry Llewellyn, 410-313-2236  
stllewellyn@howardcountymd.gov

### **Howard County police warn those soliciting sex online: Our detectives are on Backpage.com**

*Two men charged with solicitation in first undercover operation; more to come*

Howard County police want anyone involved in sex trade or trafficking through the popular website “Backpage.com” to be aware that they are being joined on the site by detectives looking for illegal activity. With recent increased awareness about Backpage being used for human trafficking and the sale of sex with women and underage girls, Howard County police have conducted the first in a series of undercover operations to arrest those who are engaging in the illegal activity.

“Human trafficking is a serious issue that affects cities, counties and townships around the nation,” said Police Chief Gary Gardner. “Howard County is not immune. But we want to be very clear that we are monitoring Backpage.com, as a known hub for this activity.

“Hear our warning: if you are on Backpage.com for sex services, Howard County police officers *are there with you*. Please know that the use of this site in Howard County now comes with tremendous risk,” said Chief Gardner.

Detectives set up escort ads with undercover female officers May 13 on Backpage.com. They instantly began receiving calls and text messages soliciting sex. The messages continued for nearly four hours. In total, the undercover female officers took 31 phone calls and received 38 text messages.

This was the first operation of its kind for Howard County and is intended to serve as a warning to those who use Backpage.com for sex services. In this operation, two men were arrested and charged with solicitation of prostitution, Francis Gilbert Gomes, 57, of Laurel, and Deangelo Deahmari Edwards, 21, of Waldorf. Investigators expect that future operations will result in many more arrests.

“We’ve put you on notice,” said Chief Gardner. “If you visit Backpage.com to solicit sex in Howard County, you can also expect to visit our detention center.”

###