

**TRUMBULL COUNTY PROSECUTOR'S OFFICE**  
**Dennis Watkins, Prosecutor**  
**REPEAT VIOLENT OFFENDER NEWSLETTER**

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## **Appeals court upholds conviction, 3-year sentence in Trumbull County drug case**

**Appellate Prosecutor Charles Morrow, who won appeal, praises Judge Lucci's unanimous opinion and states defendant's heroin, cocaine and fentanyl peddling would have gotten her much more time not too long ago.**

The Ohio 11<sup>th</sup> District court of Appeals on Monday upheld the conviction and 36-month prison sentence of a 36-year-old Trumbull County woman convicted in 2025 of multi-count drug felonies.



Trumbull County Judge Sarah T. Kovoov sentenced Ashley Crislip, also known as Ashley Winters, on June 10, 2025, after Crislip pleaded guilty to fifth-degree trafficking in a fentanyl-related compound, two counts of fourth-degree trafficking in fentanyl-related compound, fifth-degree trafficking in cocaine and third-degree possessions of heroin, cocaine and fentanyl-related compound felonies.

The case involved the defendant selling drugs to a confidential informant working with the sheriff's TAG anti-drug task force in the vicinity of Warren G. Harding High School in June and July of 2019. During a subsequent raid of the defendant's residence, TAG officers recovered 10 grams of fentanyl, about 10 grams of heroin, about 20 grams of cocaine, \$512 in cash as well as firearms.

In her appeal, Crislip and her attorney Aaron Miekke assigned four errors that the trial court:

- Erred by considering improper, speculative and personal factors at sentencing;
- Failed to properly weigh mitigating evidence and rehabilitation presented in the background investigation of the defendant;
- Violated due process by threatening to revoke Crislip's bond prior to the plea hearing, which demonstrated the court had already predetermined to impose a prison sentence;
- Erred by failing to inquire into potential judicial conflict of interest raised on the record because of a prior attorney-client relationship.

The appellate judges, Eugene Lucci, Matt Lynch and Robert J. Patton, found that all four assignments of error lacked merit and affirmed the conviction and prison sentence. Crislip will continue to serve her sentence at the Northeast Correctional Center, with release scheduled for January 2028.

In writing his decision, Judge Lucci noted “a judge’s sentencing requires the exercise of personal judgment; the court is not required to divorce itself from all personal experiences and make (its) decision in a vacuum.”

“Considering the facts, appellant has failed to demonstrate the trial court acted vindictively or otherwise violated her due process rights,” Lucci continued.

The Prosecutor’s Office notes that drug sentences for peddling heroin and cocaine were before (at one time in the 1980s up to 20 to 40 years for sales) much longer and repeatedly doing so, increased the penalties even more. With light penalties, there is less deterrence.

The oral arguments of this appellate case were argued in January at Warren JFK High School in January as part of the 11<sup>th</sup> District’s “Courtroom in the Classroom” program. School was canceled that day because of a snowstorm, but about 20 students still showed up to observe the arguments delivered by Miekle and Assistant Prosecutor Charles Morrow. The case was originally prosecuted by Assistant Prosecutor Gina Thomas.

According to 11<sup>th</sup> District court administrator/magistrate Shibani Sheth-Massacci, this “Courtroom in the Classroom” program is “particularly significant as our nation approaches the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Declaration of Independence – a powerful opportunity to demonstrate the enduring principles of liberty and self-government.”

For more information, contact Guy M. Vogrin, investigator/public information officer for the Trumbull County Prosecutor’s Office at 330-675-2485.