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PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

Date: August 6, 2021
Re: Christine Marie Rocco
Murder Inmate Granted Parole

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Modesto, California - Stanislaus County District Attorney Birgit Fladager announced today that Christine Marie Rocco, age 34, of Modesto, was found suitable for parole during a July 21, 2021, hearing of the State Board of Parole Hearings held at the Central California Women's Facility in Chowchilla, California. Deputy District Attorney Ney Montenegro appeared at the hearing on behalf of the People.

On January 11, 2009, Sheriff's deputies responded to a medical call involving a deceased 3-month-old at a home in unincorporated Modesto. The infant was lying on the floor in a bedroom wrapped only in a blue flannel blanket and wearing a soiled diaper. The infant's mother, Christine Rocco, told deputies that she had put the child to bed at midnight and discovered the body at 8:00 a.m. Rocco said she had recently moved to the area from Arizona to live with her parents. She reported feeding her baby every one-and-a-half hours although deputies noted there was very little food in the house and the child appeared malnourished.

The last time the infant was seen by a doctor was in October in Arizona at which time the child was doing well. Two weeks prior to her death, the baby's appetite decreased and she began having regular diarrhea and losing weight. Although Rocco had been approved for local medical benefits in December, she believed the child was fine despite the obvious symptoms and had not taken her to see a local doctor.

An autopsy revealed the infant was poorly developed and extremely emaciated due to malnourishment. The cause of death was determined to be sepsis caused by malnutrition, dehydration and severe emaciation. At the time of her death, the baby's weight was one pound less than it had been at birth.

Rocco was arrested and charged with murder. During the subsequent jury trial, a child-abuse medical doctor testified that the 3-month-old victim had starved to death. In his opinion, any competent adult looking at the baby would have realized that she was profoundly malnourished and needed immediate medical care.

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On May 20, 2016, a Stanislaus County Superior Court jury convicted Rocco of second degree murder. On November 4, 2016, Judge Rick Distaso sentenced Rocco to serve the statutorily mandated 15 years to life in state prison.

At the parole hearing on July 21, 2021, prosecutor Montenegro argued against Rocco's release on parole based upon the severe neglect involved in the crime. The Board of Parole Hearings disagreed and granted parole. The Board based their decision on Rocco's age and age-related physical disabilities, her completion of substantial programming while incarcerated, the fact that she had committed no serious rule violations in the last five years and a report by a prison psychologist gave the opinion that she posed a low risk to the public of future violence if she were to be released.

This was Rocco's first and only parole hearing. She has been in prison since November 14, 2016.

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