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MEDIA RELEASE

The courage of a 14-year-old girl who traveled from Switzerland to testify helped convince a jury to convict a 50-year-old volleyball coach of sex assault in a recent trial.

On January 14, 2016, Akusitino Atonio was found guilty as charged of two counts of sex assault in the third degree. He faces five years in prison for each count when he is sentenced on April 18.

Atonio was coach of a youth volleyball team that the victim played for. Because she trusted Atonio, the girl accepted a ride home after practice one day. In the car, Atonio repeatedly fondled her.

The girl immediately reported the assault and Atonio was arrested. But before the case could go to trial, the girl's family moved to Europe.

When it came time for the girl to take the witness stand in court, the prosecutor's office brought her back to Hawaii.

Facing Atonio, the girl told the jury exactly what happened and demonstrated how he groped her several times as she sat in the car, shocked and unsure what to do, deputy prosecutor Loren Haugen Jr. said.

The jury returned a verdict in an hour and 21 minutes.