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Columbus City Attorney, Franklin County Commissioners, and Columbus State Community College Announce Innovative Public Safety Program

Project Taillight Provides Free Vehicle Light Repair to Increase Community Safety and Reduce Traffic Citations

COLUMBUS, OH—Today, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced an innovative public safety and crime prevention program being piloted by the City Attorney's Office and the Franklin County Commissioners, in partnership with Columbus State Community College, which aims to help Columbus residents by providing repair services for broken or burned-out safety lights on their vehicle. The program, Project Taillight, seeks to improve community safety by connecting low-income residents with proactive headlight, taillight, license plate light, and/or turn signal repair services for free.

“We know that non-violent crime is often linked to poverty and lack of economic opportunity, and the City Attorney's Office remains committed to finding creative ways to reduce these avoidable interactions between neighbors and law enforcement,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“Our hope is that this program will help keep our neighbors safe and reduce traffic violations for small issues like a broken taillight or turn signal, giving police officers even more time to focus on more urgent, violent crime in our community.”**

The vehicle repairs are performed by students enrolled in Columbus State Community College's Automotive Technology program. Over the past few months, the pilot program has held soft-launch events as partners work through operational logistics of onsite repairs at the college and processes for verifying eligibility and identifying and ordering parts for repairs. The next Project Taillight event will take place Tuesday, May 25, 2021 at Columbus State.

“Part of the mission of Columbus State is to serve the community,” said Ian Andrews, assistant professor of Engineering & Transportation Technologies. **“This program, which assists needs-based car owners with safety-related repairs, is a modest way we can give back that appears to have big impact for the folks coming through the program.”**

The City Attorney's Office and Franklin County Commissioners are working through community organizations and neighborhood groups to promote Project Taillight, secure participants, verify eligibility and schedule repairs with Columbus State's Automotive Technology program. Franklin County residents in households with annual incomes at or below 200% of the federal poverty level are eligible to participate in this program.

“Research shows there is an ever-increasing rise in residents facing financial challenges, these challenges are exasperated even further when our low-income neighbors are disproportionality impacted by non-moving traffic violations while driving to places like school or work,” said Franklin County Commissioner John O’Grady. **“The Project Taillight pilot program not only improves safety on our roads but lifts-up those marginalized community members that are negatively impacted by these infractions and the criminal justice system. Connecting those in need with free lighting system repairs while providing Columbus State Community College students teaching and learning opportunities is yet another win-win way Franklin County stays committed to promoting racial equity, inclusion and diversity and eliminating racial disparities.”**

As a pilot program, Project Taillight is currently scheduled to run through the end of 2021. The \$50,000 budget comes from the U.S. Department of Justice's Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance, Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) sub-award from Franklin County Board of Commissioners' Office of Justice Policy and Programs, and a \$25,000 contribution from the Columbus Department of Public Safety general fund.

To participate in the Project Taillight program, residents must be pre-registered through the Columbus City Attorney's Office following the eligibility screening. For more information, please contact our office at 614-702-7462 or outreach@columbus.gov

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