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City Attorney Zach Klein Announces Guilty Plea in Anti-LGBTQ+ Bias Crime where Defendant Urinated on Pride Flag at Victims' Home

*Says that city prosecutors worked with victims at every step on an outcome that
balances criminal accountability and restorative justice*

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced city prosecutors resolved an anti-LGBTQ+ bias crime case involving a defendant who was caught on camera urinating on a pride flag and directing homophobic remarks toward residents at a home in Columbus's Weinland Park neighborhood in February. The defendant, Mr. Trey Fetzer, pleaded guilty to a misdemeanor criminal trespass charge Wednesday after completing a number of community service and class hours with LGBTQ+ organizations at the request of the victims.

“As City Attorney, I’ve drawn a line in the sand on hate, instructing my office to work with victims on the most appropriate outcomes in these cases,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“In this case, victims came forward with a call for no jail time and an opportunity for restorative justice, and after consulting with them and defense counsel at every step in this process, city prosecutors offered a rigorous mitigation plan that balances criminal accountability with victim-centered justice.**

“As long as I’m City Attorney, we will continue this approach of aggressive prosecution with an eye toward justice for victims of all hate crimes—because hate has no home in Columbus.”

In February, city prosecutors charged the defendant with four misdemeanor charges, including ethnic intimidation, criminal mischief, criminal trespass and disorderly conduct. City prosecutors consulted the victims at every step of the process, who expressed an interest for mitigation in the case, which would allow the defendant to plead only to the misdemeanor criminal trespass charge after completing an extensive list of restorative justice actions.

Over the past five months, the defendant performed a number of service hours volunteering for Stonewall Cincinnati at the city’s pride festival, attended lectures and classes with Stonewall Columbus, and met additional requirements to be reinstated at The Ohio State University.

After pleading guilty to the fourth degree misdemeanor criminal trespass, Mr. Fetzer was fined \$250 and given one year of probation.

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Raven Shank, one of the victims in the case, issued the following statement today discussing the impact of this crime, both for the victims and the larger Columbus LGBTQ+ community:

“We think it’s important for both the Court and the defendant to understand the impact this crime has had on us. While the overt act itself was merely gross and crude, the larger impact has been on our sense of safety and well-being. We know that being openly and proudly part of the LGBTQ+ community comes with tradeoffs. On one hand, we get to authentically live our lives and celebrate our culture in a way that brings us joy with our community. On the other hand, it opens us up to harassment and potentially violence by those who don’t think we should have a public life that includes those aspects of ourselves.

“When Mr. Fetzer urinated on our property and shouted vulgar threats to us, he didn’t just go where he wasn’t supposed to and damage property. He sent a message to us and those like us that we don’t belong here and should hide who we are. We refuse to do that.

“Having said that, the crime has made us feel like we’re less safe. We’ve had to be more cautious in our day-to-day lives. We have three minor children in the house between the five of us, and they’ve had to deal with the worry that comes from not knowing if they’ll be safe at home, let alone in the neighborhood. And this act sent a message to the LGBTQ+ community of Columbus that you might be next. Mr. Fetzer may not have considered the impact this act had, but we’re all affected by his actions just the same.

“We live here in Columbus because it’s generally a safer and more welcoming place for us. Some of us moved here from other parts of Ohio specifically for that reason. Mr. Fetzer chipped away at that sense of safety, and needs to be held accountable for doing so.”