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City Attorney Zach Klein Says Notorious Problem Landlord Facing Jail Time for Violating Court Orders to Maintain Livable Conditions for Tenants

Klein says that City will stop at nothing to hold problem landlords accountable for deplorable living conditions

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced the Property Action Team is taking aggressive legal action to hold a notorious problem landlord accountable for continually defying court orders to maintain livable conditions at his 32 rental properties across the City.

Property Action Team lawyers recently asked to revoke Joseph Alaura's probation from a 2018 case where the Court ordered him to maintain safe, sanitary living conditions for tenants. Environmental Court Judge Stephanie Mingo sided with the City this week, sentencing Mr. Alaura to 175 days in jail for violating his probation.

“Once a problem landlord is on our radar, we will stop at nothing to hold them accountable to tenants and the City. In this case, the defendant continues to defy court orders and subject vulnerable residents to deplorable living conditions. That kind of brazen disregard for people and the law is unacceptable and the reason why we’re taking these aggressive punitive measures,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein.

In a recent court hearing, the City Attorney's Property Action Team argued to revoke Mr. Alaura's probation and place him in jail for the remaining 175 days of his sentence from a 2018 case where he repeatedly failed to repair a fire-damaged duplex he owns in the Hilltop neighborhood. Eight years after the first unsafe order on the property, Code Enforcement noted significant violations at the premises during a March 2024 inspection and determined that the duplex remains unsafe for human habitation. Mr. Alaura is to report to the Franklin County Jail on Friday, May 10 to serve the remainder of his sentence.

In a separate court filing in Environmental Court, Property Action Team lawyers asked that the Court issue an injunction requiring Alaura to maintain his properties in compliance with

Columbus City Code. The City asked the Court to appoint a receiver to bring the properties up to code if Alaura fails to do so himself.

According to court documents, the City claims the defendant flagrantly disregarded the Court's order to maintain his rental properties. In recent months, Code Enforcement and Probation Officers conducted inspections of Mr. Alaura's Columbus properties and found numerous violations at 17 properties, two of which were vacated after being deemed unfit for human habitation.

One property, located at 698 Stewart Ave., was cited for 16 violations, including no electricity, gas or heat, leaking sinks and sewage lines, a roach infestation, and other parts of the property in disrepair.

Another property, located at 1150 Olney Drive, was cited for no heat, inoperable sinks, a rat infestation and extension cords running throughout the house.

Other properties owned by Mr. Alaura that Code Enforcement Officers inspected included violations for no water, rodent infestations, broken windows, plumbing issues, and a still-running furnace disconnected from the ducts in one of the homes.

Properties that remain in violation of court-ordered remediation at the time of the City's filings include:

- 2389 S. 7th St.
- 60 Brehl Ave.
- 1877 Eddystone Ave.
- 949 Ellsworth Ave.
- 920 Lawrence Dr.
- 188-190 1/2 Lechner Ave.
- 125 Midland Ave.
- 154-156 Midland Ave.
- 1150 Olney Dr.
- 698 Stewart Ave.
- 1986-1988 Fairmont Ave.
- 457-459 N. Garfield Ave.
- 2571 Grasmere Ave.
- 376 Hamilton Ave.
- 1681-1683 Harvard Ave.
- 2578 Howey Rd.
- 724 Stewart Ave.

“Whether you own one property or many, a small apartment building or large complex, as a landlord in the City of Columbus, you must provide safe, sanitary living conditions for tenants—no exceptions,” said Property Action Team Attorney Robert Doersam. **“The defendant in this case continually violated these basic terms. We had no choice but to take action to protect tenants and the safety of our neighborhoods.”**