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City Makes Permanent Initiative to Cut Down on Unnecessary Arrests

Leaders agree to stop arresting non-violent defendants with warrants

COLUMBUS – Today, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced that City officials have agreed to make permanent a policy aimed at decreasing the number of individuals arrested for non-violent offenses.

Under the policy, most defendants with non-violent misdemeanor warrants will no longer be arrested on their outstanding warrant. Instead, they will receive a second summons, or order to appear in front of a judge.

“We have been called to fundamentally rethink our criminal justice system – through big, systemic reforms and in day-to-day changes,” said Klein. “This policy will make a real impact on our system and reduce the number of non-violent people we’re unnecessarily arresting. This change also frees up police officers to focus on real issues and violent crime in our community.”

Officers will still maintain discretion in deciding whether or not to provide the second summons based on the details of the occurring incident. And, if a defendant repeatedly fails to make their court date, judges have the ability to indicate that they should not be eligible for a new summons.

The initiative was first implemented in response to concerns about jail capacity throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, and the City Attorney, Clerk of Courts, Municipal Court and Columbus Police recently decided to make the policy permanent. Since April 14, CPD has issued second summonses 234 times.

The initiative is also part of Klein’s broader effort to comprehensively address fundamental inefficiencies and inequalities in the criminal justice system. Since taking office, the City Attorney has spearheaded efforts intended to promote public safety, prioritize jail space for violent offenders awaiting trial, save taxpayer money, and reduce the amount of time individuals spend in jail while awaiting trial for non-violent misdemeanor offenses. That includes eliminating cash bail, ending the prosecution of low-level marijuana cases and implementing a first-of-its-kind theft diversion program.

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