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Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein Says State Officials Continue to Skirt Responsibility for Failed Background Check System

Says Attorney General and state authorities have failed in their legal duty to collect information from counties, allowing thousands of people prohibited from purchasing firearms to pass background checks

COLUMBUS, OH—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein issued a statement today following the unveiling of the state’s eWarrants system, which would purportedly work to fill some of the gaps in Ohio’s broken background check system by expanding electronic filing options for local governments. However, the system is voluntary and the state’s Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), a division of the Attorney General’s Office, has not been instructed to proactively collect information from counties as required by Ohio law.

“Ohio’s criminal background check system is broken, but instead of stepping up to the plate and fixing the issues, the state continues to take halfhearted actions that put the burden onto already resource-starved local governments. Meanwhile, thousands of dangerous individuals continue to fall through the cracks, putting every Ohioan at risk,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“Victims of domestic violence, schools and local employers rely on these system to be accurate and the state has failed them. That’s why we continue to call on the court to intervene to ensure the state upholds its duty to collect critical information that can improve public safety and save lives.”**

The City of Columbus [filed a lawsuit](#) in the Franklin County Court of Common Pleas in 2020 alleging that the BCI has failed to fulfill its legal duty to collect and maintain criminal records from across the state to enter into the state’s database, which is used to conduct background checks on everything from firearm purchases to pre-employment screenings.

The failure of the state to address massive gaps in reporting have potentially let thousands of people prohibited from possessing firearms because of a criminal conviction pass background checks—including background checks required to buy firearms, obtain an Ohio concealed carry permit and be hired in sensitive positions including working with children.

The lawsuit also alleges that the gaps in criminal conviction record reporting are only one of many severe deficiencies in Ohio’s background check system, which also include massive gaps in the reporting of outstanding arrest warrants and of court findings of mental illness or commitments to mental health facilities.

The City of Columbus lawsuit is currently in its discovery period with a cutoff of June 2023. The trial is currently set for October 2023.

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