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City Attorney Zach Klein Pushes for Higher Cash Bonds for Violent Domestic Abusers Who Pose Greatest Threat to Victims

Says \$500,000 minimum bond and other requirements upon arraignment will better protect victims as domestic violence-related homicides on the rise

COLUMBUS, OH— Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein today announced his office will begin asking judges for a \$500,000 minimum cash surety bond for domestic violence offenses involving a firearm or significant bodily injury to the victim. This policy change is meant to help address rising domestic violence-related homicides in Central Ohio over the past year. City Attorney Klein has also instructed city prosecutors to request at arraignment GPS monitoring, no use of alcohol or drugs with random drug screenings, and no weapons possession for the duration of the case for offenders.

“We cannot legally hold individuals charged with misdemeanor domestic violence without bond no matter how dangerous they are to their victims, but we can make it harder for these violent offenders to get out and commit further, more lethal acts of violence,” said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. **“I’m urging judges to grant these stricter requirements so that we can better protect victims and their families.”**

Under current Ohio law, there is no mechanism for judges to hold a person charged with a misdemeanor without bail, no matter the level of threat the person poses to the victim. City Attorney Klein says he believes that a \$500,000 minimum bond and other requirements reflect the seriousness and potential lethality of domestic violence offenses involving a firearm or significant bodily injury to the victim.

“Domestic Violence homicides in the City of Columbus this year have already surpassed the total number that occurred in 2022,” said Columbus Division of Police Chief Elaine Bryant. **“We support all efforts that would protect these victims and their families and make it harder for these violent offenders to get back on our streets.”**

Domestic Violence homicides in the City of Columbus this year have already surpassed the total number that occurred in 2022, an alarming surge city officials hope to curb with these changes. According to data compiled by the American Journal of Public Health, access to a gun makes it five times more likely that the abusive partner will kill their victim.

“Increasing bond for violent domestic abusers reflects the seriousness of where we are right now. Too many victims are at risk, and this is a step in the right direction to keep these violent offenders off the streets and more closely monitored upon release. This change has the potential to save lives,” said Mary Lynn Caswell, Director of the City’s Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit.

The City Attorney’s Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit has trained advocates assigned to every case. These advocates walk survivors through every step of the legal process and work alongside city prosecutors who specialize in domestic violence and stalking cases to get violent offenders off the streets. In 2021, the City Attorney’s Office prosecuted more than 4,000 domestic violence cases, saw hundreds of protection orders granted, and referred more than 200 cases for felony prosecution.

Here’s what other area leaders are saying about Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein’s call for enhanced measures to better protect domestic violence victims and their families:

“The Franklin County Prosecutor joins in support of City Attorney Zach Klein acknowledging the serious nature of Domestic Violence cases and the often devastating consequences. The Franklin County Prosecutor always encourages bond setting consistent with Ohio Law and the need to secure the appearance of defendants in court and ensuring the safety of victims and the community. We respect the rulings of our bench and will continue to advocate for bonds that recognize the severity of crimes against family members,” said **Franklin County Prosecutor Gary Tyack**.

“The work of state legislators to continue strengthening the laws against Domestic Abuse, and collaborative community efforts in central Ohio such as the Blueprint for Safety Project clearly demonstrate the unified commitment to protect victims and their families. On behalf of Sheriff Dallas Baldwin, the Franklin County Sheriff’s Office supports the issuance of higher bonds and greater monitoring measures by the court to keep violent domestic abusers off our streets, reducing their ability to reoffend,” said **Franklin County Sheriff’s Office Chief Deputy Rick Minerd**.

“Domestic violence is a serious crime that poses a threat to public safety and should not be taken lightly. Setting low bonds for these cases sends the wrong message and can put victims at risk. We need to ensure that survivors are protected. Setting higher bonds is a step in the right direction to achieving this goal. LSS CHOICES stands with City Attorney Klein on this issue,” said **Maria N. Houston-Beck, Psy.D. Executive Director, LSS CHOICES**.

“Building trust is paramount to domestic violence survivors’ escaping from fatal situations and moving toward safety, recovery, and healing. The push for higher bonds for abusers restores survivors trust with the criminal justice system and its professionals to keep them out of harm’s way. LSS CHOICES is committed to a collective approach to better protect survivors,” said **Dawnya Underwood, LMSW, PMP, Vice President of Programs for LSS CHOICES**.

“With the increasing number of domestic violence homicides over the past year, we appreciate the city's efforts to take seriously the safety needs of victims of intimate partner violence. Actions taken by the courts to seriously consider evidenced based risk factors when responding to alleged abusers help address potential safety for victims and their families of during periods of high danger. We believe that the efforts by the city through the Blueprints for Safety initiative to improve the community’s coordinated response to domestic violence can save lives,” **said Nancy Cunningham, Interim President, Nationwide Children’s Hospital, The Center for Family Safety and Healing.**

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