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City Attorney Zach Klein Offers Resources, Hope for Victims Amid Spike in Domestic Violence Homicides

COVID-19 pandemic suspected cause of increased lethal violence

COLUMBUS – Today, Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein discussed a recent increase in domestic violence homicides in the city, largely attributed to the coronavirus pandemic. Klein offered resources for women and families seeking help and reiterated his office’s ongoing efforts to protect victims and hold offenders accountable.

“The coronavirus pandemic has strained our communities and our families. We are concerned that forced isolation along with increased anxiety about food, housing and employment could turn already unstable situations violent,” said City Attorney Klein. “The City Attorney’s Office stands ready to assist women and families experiencing abuse. We want people to know that there is still help available and we want to keep them safe. My office remains open, so the wheels of justice are still rolling.”

Over the past week, the City of Columbus saw a near-average number of domestic violence arrests, at 60. But there has been a recent spike in domestic violence homicides with three homicides in the last three weeks. There were seven domestic violence homicides in Columbus in all of 2019. City Attorney Klein is concerned that this pattern of escalating violence could persist while people are quarantined due to the coronavirus pandemic.

City Attorney Klein emphasized that his office’s domestic violence and stalking unit remains open. The unit provides education, support, counseling, resources, crisis intervention and overall assistance to victims of domestic violence and stalking. They also help victims navigate the legal system by assisting them in obtaining protection orders, collecting statements and connecting them with legal counsel.

“Our team is here every day helping victims, over the phone and in person,” said Mary Lynn Caswell, Director of the City Attorney’s Domestic Violence and Stalking Unit. “We will continue to connect victims to resources and our advocates are working tirelessly to keep them safe. That’s our top priority, now and always.”

City Attorney Klein also addressed concerns about letting offenders out of jail due to

COVID-19. He assured the public that violent offenders will not be released from jail, especially during this time of increased vulnerability.

“Since I took office, we’ve been focused on ensuring that only the people who deserve to be in jail are kept there,” said City Attorney Klein. “We remain focused on holding domestic violence offenders accountable. They should not be in close contact with their victims, especially during this time when we’re all confined to our homes.”

City Attorney Klein urged any residents who feel unsafe and need help to contact the LSS CHOICES for Victims of Domestic Violence 24-hour hotline at 614-224-HOME. Individuals in immediate danger should call 911.

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