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CONTACT:
Miriam Aroni Krinsky
Executive Director, Fair and Just Prosecution
krinskym@krinsky.la; cell: 818 416 5218

Leading Criminal Justice Leaders Call On Kansas Officials To Fund Unit to Review Past Convictions and Correct Injustices

More Than 50 Current and Former Elected Prosecutors and Police Chiefs Rally Behind DA Mark Dupree’s Efforts to Establish a Conviction Integrity Unit in Wyandotte County, Kansas

A group of 56 current and former elected prosecutors, state attorneys general, and law enforcement leaders banded together today to call on the Kansas City Board of Commissioners to take immediate action and release funding requested by District Attorney Mark Dupree for the creation of a Conviction Integrity Unit (CIU) in the Wyandotte County DA’s Office. Already active in more than 30 jurisdictions, CIUs are a nationally recognized best practice for reviewing and addressing past convictions that raise concerns about the integrity of the justice system.

Calling out local law enforcement’s “misguided” opposition to DA Dupree’s proposal, current and former Police Chiefs and elected prosecutors from around the nation signed on to the letter explaining that “reviewing and correcting past injustices is squarely within the DA’s role, and indeed his obligation.” Signatories include 30 current elected DAs and State’s Attorneys, many of whom have CIUs in their own offices, such as Eric Gonzalez (Brooklyn, NY), Kim Ogg (Houston, TX), Kim Foxx (Chicago, IL), Cy Vance (New York, NY) and Jeff Rosen (San Jose, CA), current and former state attorneys general including AG Karl Racine (District of Columbia) and Former AG Jim Petro (State of Ohio), and a dozen current and former police chiefs/commissioners and Sheriffs including Chief Chris Magnus (Tucson, AZ), Chief Sylvia Moir (Tempe, AZ), Chief Tim Lentz (Covington, Louisiana) and Commissioner Branville Bard (Cambridge, MA).

DA Dupree recently announced plans to establish a CIU to formalize a review process for credible claims of innocence or official misconduct in past cases—200 such claims have already been received by his office. The impetus for this unit was DA Dupree’s months-long examination of a high-profile case that led to the exoneration of Lamonte McIntyre, a teenager who spent 23 years behind bars for a crime he did not commit. A CIU would speed up the
processing of other cases raising similar concerns about past injustices. As the letter notes: “victims are safer—and we prevent further victimization—when communities trust that their law enforcement officials seek the truth rather than a ‘win.’”

Local law enforcement leaders in Kansas have rallied against Dupree’s efforts – opposition that has stalled funding for the unit. The Kansas City Board of Commissioners will decide as early as this week whether to release funds for the CIU, as requested by DA Dupree.

“Anyone who cares about fairness and public safety should support efforts to correct the mistakes made by our justice system,” said Miriam Krinsky, Executive Director of Fair and Just Prosecution, a national network of elected prosecutors committed to change and innovation that organized the letter. “A prosecutor’s core responsibility is the pursuit of justice and truth in every case. Allowing injustices to continue erodes public trust in the rule of law, which is the bedrock of our criminal justice system.”

“CIUs are an increasingly common way for prosecutors, who have an ethical obligation to remedy instances of injustice, to review not only claims of innocence, but also of law enforcement misconduct or due process violations,” said District Attorney Jeff Rosen, a signatory on the letter and one of the first DAs to establish a CIU. “Our CIU has been instrumental in identifying and guarding against miscarriages of justice and promoting enhanced accountability and transparency.”

According to the National Registry of Exonerations, there have been more than 2,240 exonerations since 1989, when the advent of DNA technology opened a new door for proving innocence.

“We should applaud prosecutors’ efforts to re-examine cases where the integrity of a conviction is at issue and recognize that everyone in our justice system bears the responsibility for a miscarriage of justice,” said Police Chief Chris Magnus. “That is why I have joined dozens of law enforcement leaders in voicing support for DA Dupree’s efforts to deliver a more fair justice system and promote a safer community.”

The full statement is available here.

LIST OF SIGNATORIES

Aramis Ayala
State Attorney, 9th Judicial Circuit, Florida

Branville Bard
Commissioner, Cambridge, Massachusetts Police Department

Diana Becton
District Attorney, Contra Costa County, California
Sherry Boston  
District Attorney, DeKalb County, Georgia

Joseph Brann  
Former Chief, Hayward, California Police Department  
Former Director, Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, U.S. Department of Justice

Kenyen Brown  
Former U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Alabama

John T. Chisholm  
District Attorney, Milwaukee County, Wisconsin

Scott Colom  
District Attorney, Sixteenth Circuit, Mississippi

Brendan Cox  
Former Chief, Albany, New York Police Department

Michael Dougherty  
District Attorney, 20th Judicial District, Colorado

Kimberly Foxx  
State’s Attorney, Cook County, Illinois

Kimberly Gardner  
Circuit Attorney, City of St. Louis, Missouri

Sarah F. George  
State’s Attorney, Chittenden County, Vermont

Sim Gill  
District Attorney, Salt Lake County, Utah

Eric Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Kings County, New York

Mark Gonzalez  
District Attorney, Nueces County, Texas

Christian Gossett  
District Attorney, Winnebago County, Wisconsin

Robert J. Hoffman  
 Former Chief, Plainfield, Connecticut Police Department

John Hummel  
District Attorney, Deschutes County, Oregon
Lawrence S. Krasner  
District Attorney, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

William Lansdowne  
Former Chief, San Diego, California Police Department  
Former Chief, San Jose, California Police Department  
Former Chief, Richmond, California Police Department

Tim Lentz  
Chief, Covington, Louisiana Police Department

Chris Magnus  
Chief, Tucson, Arizona Police Department

James Manfre  
Former Sheriff, Flager County, Florida

Beth McCann  
District Attorney, 2nd Judicial District, Colorado

Kenneth Mighell  
Former U.S. Attorney, Northern District of Texas

Sylvia Moir  
Chief, Tempe, Arizona Police Department

Stephanie N. Morales  
Commonwealth’s Attorney, Portsmouth, Virginia

Marilyn J. Mosby  
State’s Attorney, Baltimore City, Maryland

Melissa W. Nelson  
State Attorney, 4th Judicial Circuit, Florida

Jerome O’Neill  
Former Acting U.S. Attorney, District of Vermont  
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Vermont

Kim Ogg  
District Attorney, Harris County, Texas

Jim Petro  
Former Attorney General, State of Ohio

Channing Phillips  
Former U.S. Attorney, District of Columbia  
Former Senior Counselor to the Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice  
Former Deputy Associate Attorney General, U.S. Department of Justice
Richard Pocker  
Former U.S. Attorney, District of Nevada  
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Nevada

Karl Racine  
Attorney General, District of Columbia

Ira Reiner  
Former District Attorney, Los Angeles County, California  
Former City Attorney, Los Angeles, California

Jeff Rosen  
District Attorney, Santa Clara County, California

Marian Ryan  
District Attorney, Middlesex County, Massachusetts

Tori Verber Salazar  
District Attorney, San Joaquin County, California

Dan Satterberg  
Prosecuting Attorney, King County, Washington

Ronal Serpas  
Co-Chairman, Law Enforcement Leaders to Reduce Crime & Incarceration  
Former Superintendent, New Orleans, Louisiana Police Department  
Former Chief, Metropolitan Nashville, Tennessee Police Department  
Former Chief, Washington State Patrol

Carol A. Siemon  
Prosecuting Attorney, Ingham County, Michigan

Mark Spawn  
Former Chief, Fulton, New York Police Department

Norm Stamper  
Former Chief, Seattle, Washington Police Department

Darrel Stephens  
Former Chief, Charlotte-Mecklenburg, North Carolina Police Department

Carter Stewart  
Former U.S. Attorney, Southern District of Ohio

David Sullivan  
District Attorney, Northwestern District, Massachusetts

Betty Taylor  
Former Chief, Winfield, Missouri Police Department
Raúl Torrez
District Attorney, Bernalillo County, New Mexico

Cyrus R. Vance Jr.
District Attorney, New York County, New York

Andrew Warren
State Attorney, 13th Judicial Circuit, Florida

Lynneice O. Washington
District Attorney, 10th Judicial Circuit, Alabama

Roy L. Austin
Former Deputy Assistant to the President for Urban Affairs, Justice and Opportunity, White House Domestic Policy Council
Former Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Columbia

Chiraag Bains
Former Senior Counsel to the Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice
Former Trial Attorney, Criminal Section, Civil Rights Division, U.S. Department of Justice

Miriam Aroni Krinsky
Executive Director, Fair and Just Prosecution
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney, Central District of California
Former Criminal Appellate Chief and Chief, General Crimes, Central District of California
Former Chair, Solicitor General’s Criminal Appellate Advisory Group

Fair and Just Prosecution is a national network of elected prosecutors working towards common-sense, compassionate criminal justice reforms. To learn more about FJP’s work, visit www.fairandjustprosecution.org or follow us on Facebook @FairAndJustProsecution.