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The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys Launches Innovative Pilot Program to Address Low-Level Retail Theft and Increase Public Safety *Five Sites Selected to Pilot Intervention Program*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – 07/06/2023 – The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (APA), in partnership with Justice System Partners (JSP), announced today that they have selected five sites to pilot a low-level retail theft intervention project. Low level retail theft-which refers to smaller-scale, lower-value shoplifting incidents, has risen in recent years, harming retailers who have been impacted by shrinkage and leading to an increase of arrests.

The five prosecutor offices that have been selected are: East Baton Rouge District Attorney's Office, LA; 18th Judicial District Attorney's Office (Centennial), CO; Santa Monica City Attorney's Office, CA; Shelby County District Attorney General's Office (Memphis), TN; and Columbus City Attorney's Office, OH.

Many individuals who engage in low-level retail theft do so as a result of unmet mental health needs, substance use and/or co-occurring disorders, or housing or food insecurity. These quality-of-life issues disproportionately affect low-income households and persons of color, which can exacerbate racial and ethnic disparities when these individuals come in contact with the criminal justice system.

This project will provide prosecutors with a set of tools to identify and address the needs of those who commit low-level retail theft. The goal of this project is to work with prosecutors' offices and their law enforcement and community partners to determine effective responses that diagnose the underlying causes of low-level theft through working directly with retailers and the communities they serve, increasing public safety and equity.

“There is a clear public safety benefit to addressing low-level retail theft cases through focusing on root causes,” said David LaBahn, President and CEO, The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys. “Particularly for low-level, non-violent offenses, those who participate in alternative



programs and other rehabilitative opportunities in lieu of traditional prosecution have a lower chance of recidivism and are less likely to commit the same crime than traditional court processes of conviction and incarceration.”

APA and research partner Justice Systems Partners will work with the selected offices to develop or expand a low-level retail theft alternative pilot program. Participating sites will engage in a collaborative assessment, planning, and implementation process for a minimum of 18 months. Pilot sites will receive \$50,000 to implement or expand programs designed to address low-level retail theft with guidance and assistance from APA and JSP.

The five sites participated in a competitive RFP process and were selected from applications received from prosecutors’ offices nationwide. The applicants included county-level offices, city prosecutors, and tribal offices, and ranged from small, medium to large jurisdictions and spanned the political spectrum.” These five sites stood out to us as being ready to take these resources and meaningfully address their retail theft in a way that benefits individuals and increases public safety,” said LaBahn.

After program implementation, the project team will work with the selected sites to assess program outcomes. JSP will collaborate with each site to ensure programmatic outcomes can be evaluated. “We are thrilled to be partnering with APA on this initiative” said Michael Menefee, Research Associate at JSP. “We believe retail theft programs provide an incredible opportunity to reduce criminal legal system contact through addressing the underlying, root causes of retail theft while providing critical resources to program participants.”

The framework for the program will be based on an assessment of an individual’s needs and providing access to direct services, so that each participant has an opportunity to have their needs addressed. Participants’ exit and entry questionnaires will also be used to monitor changes and obtain input for improving the program. The programs will also engage with partners in the community, the criminal justice system, and with businesses to ensure buy-in and program sustainability. Successful programs that address the underlying needs of participants will demonstrate that they not only improve the lives of these individuals but will positively improve the public safety and well-being of their communities and provide templates for similar programs throughout the country.

About The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys

The Association of Prosecuting Attorneys is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to support prosecutors in their efforts to create safer communities through a more just and equitable legal system. APA provides prosecutorial training and technical assistance for our membership, which is made up of elected and appointed prosecuting attorneys, law enforcement professionals and other criminal justice system actors. APA works across disciplines to increase public safety and eliminate disparities in the justice system by providing prosecutors with the most effective and innovative resources and guidance to better serve everyone in their communities.



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About Justice System Partners

JSP is a non-profit, multidisciplinary team committed to assisting criminal and juvenile legal systems and community partners with transforming their systems. We help our partners reimagine their work by combining rigorous research, technical assistance, and knowledge of evidence-informed strategies. We infuse creativity, innovation, and passion into our work, taking an integrated approach to system transformation to help our partners operationalize meaningful change.