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Public Defender Seeks to Identify Cases Potentially Impacted by Breach of Salisbury Police Department Property Room Policies; Litigation Anticipated

For immediate release – February 24, 2020.

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In light of the recent announcement regarding thefts in the property room of the Salisbury Police Department, the Maryland Office of the Public Defender is very concerned about the integrity of evidence held by the police department and its impact on convictions.

“Evidence integrity is a fundamental component of a fair trial. While the details on the extent of the issue are still forthcoming, this could impact hundreds or even thousands of current and former clients,” said Chasity Simpson, District Public Defender for Wicomico County. “We are examining current cases to determine which may be impacted and warrant dismissal, and are committed to ensuring that former clients whose case may have had compromised evidence at any stage are able to clear their names.”

Identifying cases that may be impacted is especially challenging, particularly for the years prior to electronic recordkeeping within the police department. . “We are dedicating attorneys from across the agency -- including our Wicomico County office, Post-Conviction Division, Appellate Division and Administration -- to gather as much information as possible, determine the impact on individual cases, and identify next steps that may be needed,” said Becky Feldman, Deputy Public Defender for Maryland.

Among the agency’s efforts are a hotline where people can provide information about their case via telephone or online for follow up. Individuals who have a criminal conviction or pending case involving evidence held by the Salisbury Policy Department are encouraged to contact OPD at 410-635-0046 or fill out the form at <https://forms.gle/AGvJXiY53NAVjcWf9>, also available at www.opd.state.md.us.

“The investigation may take many months, but we are maintaining a list of cases that may be implicated by the evidence breach, so that, as information develops, we can be ready to provide updates and take any appropriate action,” said Simpson.

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