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Statement of Kirsten Getty-Downs, District Public Defender for Baltimore City, Regarding
Police Corruption By Former BPD Officer Matthew Ryckman

For immediate release – December 6, 2018.

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The Office of the Public Defender for Baltimore City is dismayed, but not surprised, by the recent revelations of another police officer admitting to corruption and related crimes while in uniform with the Baltimore Police Department (BPD). The misconduct Ryckman admitted to is similar to the criminal activity committed by the Gun Trace Task Force (GTTF), which previously resulted in federal convictions for eight BPD officers and implicated nearly a dozen more.

Consistent with our response to the GTTF scandal, we are identifying the cases involving Ryckman and developing a litigation strategy to provide redress for individuals with related convictions. Our initial review has identified 335 Circuit Court cases that included Ryckman. This adds to a list of approximately 2,000 cases that were identified as connected with the convicted GTTF officers. To date, only a few hundred of those cases have been dismissed. Progress has been too slow and we continue to urge the State's Attorneys' Office (SAO) and the judiciary to take swifter action. These concerns are heightened by the additional cases that now warrant exoneration due to this latest admission.

These efforts are being led by our Special Litigation Unit, which was established in the aftermath of the GTTF indictments. The Special Litigation Unit focuses on exonerating clients whose cases involved the convicted officers and on securing access to internal affairs files. The Special Litigation Unit also strives to establish an efficient process for the swift disclosure of internal affairs' files.

As defense attorneys, we continue to see police officers like Ryckman -- with troubling histories of police misconduct that include numerous excessive force complaints, histories of outright theft, and involvement with the notorious Black Guerrilla Family gang -- remain on patrol on the streets of Baltimore as armed police officers, mistreating our clients and acting with impunity. The admissions by Ryckman, who was not part of the GTTF, underscores how any misconception that the GTTF indictments rid the BPD of serious wrongdoers is wrong.

We will continue to seek out the records that document misconduct allegations and to fight for our clients who have been harmed by the ever-growing list of known corrupt officers. However,

without meaningful change in how the BPD and the SAO handle these officers there will be another GTTF, and another, and another.

Legislators, prosecutors, judges, and city officials must all work to hold the police accountable and stop enabling wrongdoing by officer. Specifically, we call for:

- The Maryland Legislature and the City Council to repeal the secrecy afforded by the Law Enforcement Officers' Bill of Rights (LEOBR) in favor of transparency for this troubled jurisdiction.
- A judicial task force to undo convictions involving corrupt officers at a more expeditious rate.
- Local prosecutors to follow the lead of the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of California, who proactively disclosed the Ryckman admissions, to comply with their disclosure obligations, rather than to hide and obfuscate police misconduct.
- The BPD to establish and implement meaningful transparency and accountability measures, with the priority and urgency required for ongoing constitutional violations.
- The City to recognize full transparency and criminal litigation disclosures as a fundamental component of compliance with the federal Consent Decree and mass exoneration as an important redress to its wrongly convicted residents.
- The City and the BPD to make sure the work of the Consent Decree is meaningful, with recommendations by hard working and knowledgeable community partners taken seriously and implemented.

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