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COLUMBUS CITY ATTORNEY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Tuesday, January 10, 2023  
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## City Attorney Klein Announces City Shuts Down First Drug House of 2023

*Hilltop drug house has numerous police calls related to drug trafficking, violence, shootings and even the overdose death of a one-year-old child*

**COLUMBUS, OH**—Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein announced today that the City of Columbus obtained an emergency court order earlier this week to board up a drug house in the Hilltop neighborhood, the City's first in 2023. The property has been connected a multitude of police runs and complaints related to drug trafficking, violence, shootings, and even a fentanyl-related overdose death of a one-year old child. Columbus Police executed an order to board up the property located at 70 S. Harris Ave.

**“This is the first drug house we shut down in 2023, and it won’t be the last,”** said City Attorney Klein. **“The City has made it our priority to take out drug houses and go after the criminals that make our neighborhoods less safe. One by one, we’re making our streets, neighborhoods and communities safer for children, families and every Columbus resident.”**

According to court documents, Columbus Police were dispatched a number of times to the Hilltop property beginning in 2021 on the reports of a wanted felon on the premises, domestic disputes, shootings and an overdose.

On April 28, 2021, CPD responded to a report of a shooting at the premises. The shooter was identified as David Johnson, and the victim, Derek Ponder, was taken to a local hospital where he was pronounced dead just hours later. Johnson was charged with murder.

In February 2022, CPD detectives made controlled purchases of crack cocaine and fentanyl at the premises. CPD INTAC detectives then obtained and executed a search warrant at the premises, recovering fentanyl, crack cocaine, powder cocaine, heroin, firearms, firearm magazines, ammunition and more than \$1,800 in cash.

Later in February 2022, CPD detectives contacted the property owner, notifying them of felony drug offenses occurring at the property. The owner filed an eviction of the then-current tenants.

In August 2022, CPD responded to a report of a 13-year-old male shot at the premises. The victim was transported to Nationwide Children’s Hospital. Reports also indicate that Franklin County Children Services had recently removed a ten-year-old child from the home.

On November 18, 2022, CPD officers were dispatched to the premises on report of an overdose of a one-year-old child, who was transported to Nationwide Children's Hospital and pronounced deceased hours later. Testing revealed the infant was positive for fentanyl.

The suspect in the two fatalities at the property, David Johnson, was charged with involuntary manslaughter for the overdose death of his 1-year-old son. He was also charged with murder in the death of 26-year-old Derek Ponder, who he is accused of shooting during a fight in the Hilltop neighborhood.

**“Advancing safe neighborhoods begins with good neighbors, people who reach out to say something when they see something. We’re thankful for the reports of neighbors and the work of law enforcement, which allowed us to build this case and take out a dangerous drug house that has wreaked havoc in this part of the Hilltop for too long,”** said Assistant City Attorney Zach Gwin, the City’s lead attorney for nuisance property cases on the City’s west side.

[The order on the 70 S. Harris Ave. property is attached.](#)

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