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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **PHONE SCAM ALERT: CALLER CLAIMS TO BE MONTCO DETECTIVE OR SHERIFF, REQUESTS MONEY TO DISMISS ARREST WARRANT**

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (May 14, 2021) — Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin R. Steele and Montgomery County Sheriff Sean P. Kilkenny are alerting the public to a current phone scam where the perpetrator impersonates a detective or sheriff who alleges that the Montgomery County resident has an active arrest warrant that requires payment to satisfy the warrant and prevent them from being arrested.

These scam phone calls are being received throughout the county at this time, and the Montgomery County Detective Bureau is actively investigating. The typical pattern for these scam phone calls is the fraudster will call and tell the resident that there is an active arrest warrant for their failure to appear in Court, such as failing to appear for jury duty or to testify in a trial, either in Montgomery County or in a neighboring county. The fraudster will identify themselves as a "Lieutenant" or "Detective" with the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department. The names of "Lt. Daniels" and "Det. Rodriguez" have been used.

Once the fraudster gets the resident on the phone, he tells the resident the warrant can be dismissed by paying some dollar amount, typically about \$1,800, at the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office in the Courthouse. But then the fraudster switches, saying cash cannot be accepted; instead payment cards need to be purchased and loaded at a local CVS or Walgreen's. Eventually, the fraudster will tell the resident that the payment kiosk at the Courthouse has broken down, but the fraudster can accept payment over the phone and then asks the resident to provide the card's number and accompanying PIN. This information will be used by the fraudster to transfer the funds from the cards to their own accounts.

The calls are originating from spoofed or fake numbers, making them appear local, and in some cases, the fraudsters have used spoofing methods to make it appear that the call is coming from the actual number for the Montgomery County Sheriff's Department. If the fraudster leaves a message on the resident's voicemail and then returns the call, the phone call is answered "This is the Montgomery County Sheriff's Office," and they are put on hold, before the fraudster answers.

"Montgomery County residents need to know that arrest warrants are never handled in this manner," said District Attorney Steele. "No money is involved if there is a

warrant issued for someone's failure to appear in court. A failure to appear warrant must be handled in a courtroom in front of a Judge of the Court of Common Pleas. Anyone who has gotten one of these calls should alert Montgomery County Detectives that they received this call."

"Our officers are Deputy Sheriffs—not Lieutenants or Detectives—and they do not operate in this manner. Sheriff personnel will never call a resident demanding money to satisfy a warrant or demand money for any reason," said Sheriff Kilkenny.

The Montgomery County Detective Bureau has obtained a copy of one of the messages. Of note is the clear southern accent, as these calls are believed to be originating from a southern state. While the message sounds very professional and may be intimidating to the recipient, this message is fraudulent and is a scam to obtain money.

If someone receives this scam call or message and is worried that it may be legitimate, he or she can call the main Courthouse phone number of 610-278-3000 and ask for the Sheriff's Department. Calling the Courthouse main number and then being transferred to the Sheriff's Department will avoid any issue of spoofed numbers.

Anyone who has been a victim of one of these calls and turned over money to the fraudster is asked to contact the Montgomery County Detective Bureau at 610-278-3368 to speak to a detective.

Approved for release,

Kevin R. Steele