



MEMORANDUM

Date: June 22, 2016

To: The Honorable Chair and Members
Pima County Board of Supervisors

From: C.H. Huckelberry
County Administrator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "C.H. Huckelberry", is written over the typed name and title.

Re: **Weekend Warrant Resolution Court on June 11, 2016**

More than 850 individuals were assisted in resolving outstanding "failure to appear" (FTA) arrest warrants, lifting driver's license suspensions, and dealing with fines and fees from misdemeanor criminal cases during a multijurisdictional weekend warrant resolution court on Saturday, June 11, 2016. The court sessions were held at Pima County Consolidated Justice Courts and Tucson City Court; and other participating courts included South Tucson City Court, Oro Valley Magistrate Court, Marana Municipal Court and Sahuarita Municipal Court. No one was taken into custody.

The Saturday court sessions were the first in a planned quarterly series of weekend courts aimed at reducing the number of outstanding arrest warrants issued for misdemeanor defendants because of their failure to appear for court hearings. Reducing the number of FTA warrants, as well as reducing the incidence of failure to appear by improving court date reminder systems, are among the strategies Pima County is pursuing to safely reduce the jail population. The FTA problem became a focus of jail reduction efforts because of data showing that FTA's were the single largest driver of jail use. In 2014, more than 10,000 individuals were booked and held in jail on FTA warrants, 93 percent of whom had only underlying misdemeanor charges, using more than 200,000 bed days. The FTA-related jail use accounted for more than half the total jail bed days used that year. Such jail use is an enormous cost to Pima County and other local jurisdictions.

Providing an opportunity for individuals to get driver's license suspensions lifted and to deal with their financial obligations to the court is also important. Nonpayment of fines – even in civil traffic cases – can result in a suspended license, which can then escalate into a criminal matter if the individual drives with a suspended license, creating the potential for jail time and greatly increased fines.

While all of these matters can be dealt with during regular court hours, it is difficult for many individuals to get to court between 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday through Friday, because of their work hours, childcare issues, transportation problems, etc. This is particularly true for those with low incomes who live far from downtown Tucson. In addition, many people are afraid to go to court once a warrant has been issued for their arrest, thinking they will be taken into custody if they appear in court. As the weekend warrant court has shown (with

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no arrests among the hundreds who appeared), it is highly unlikely individuals with FTA warrants will be arrested if they return to court.

Justice Court reported more than 600 individuals attended its June 11 warrant court, with 181 warrants quashed, 109 driver's license suspensions quashed, 340 individuals assisted at payment windows, and 138 payment plans established or re-established. Tucson City Court had more than 500 individuals attend, of whom 223 were actually defendants. Of those, 111 appeared before a judge to have their warrant or warrants quashed, and another 112 individuals were assisted in another way (such as removing driver's license suspensions, accepting payments, or establishing payment plans). Another dozen cases were handled by the Oro Valley, Marana and Sahuarita courts.

Another warrant court day is planned for October 1, 2016. The FTA and other jail reduction strategies are being pursued in cooperation with the MacArthur Foundation's Safety & Justice Challenge, which awarded the County \$1.5 million over two years to support its efforts to safely reduce jail admissions and length of stay, as well as to address recidivism and disproportionate impact on low-income, minority and mentally ill adults.

CHH/mjk

c: The Honorable Chris Nanos, Pima County Sheriff
The Honorable Keith Bee, Presiding Justice, Consolidated Justice Courts
Doug Kooi, Court Administrator, Consolidated Justice Courts
Ellen Wheeler, Assistant County Administrator