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The Public Defender Service Supports Virtual Safe Surrender

****For Immediate Release****

The Public Defender Service for the District of Columbia (PDS) announces its efforts to support the last weekend of the D.C. Superior Court's 2021 Virtual Safe Surrender program (Safe Surrender). This year's Safe Surrender allows persons to resolve outstanding "bench warrants" in D.C. Superior Court (Court) misdemeanor cases. A bench warrant is a warrant issued by the court when someone misses a scheduled court hearing. This is different from an arrest warrant for a new crime. Safe Surrender is only for bench warrants and only in misdemeanor cases. "What makes this year's Safe Surrender program such an excellent opportunity is that it is being held virtually," says PDS Trial Chief David Knight. A person who thinks they have a bench warrant can register with the Court before the program starts and then appear in court using a smartphone or computer. The Court and the prosecutors have promised to give all persons who surrender on misdemeanor bench warrants favorable consideration in exchange for their surrendering to resolve their warrants.

"PDS understands that people might be confused about what warrants are or nervous about surrendering. That's why we are encouraging people with legal questions to call us to receive FREE preliminary legal information and advice about Safe Surrender. **While it is possible for a person to participate in Safe Surrender virtually by going to certain Court sponsored locations, PDS strongly encourages people to participate virtually using their own equipment if at all possible or to call PDS for FREE preliminary legal information and advice before going to a Court sponsored location,**" states Mr. Knight.

PDS attorneys are on duty to answer questions Monday through Friday, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. at 202-628-1200.

A person can determine if they have an open misdemeanor bench warrant by using the search function at www.dccourts.gov/safesurrender. Using that same link, a person can see Frequently Asked Questions and can register for a time to surrender virtually. **This is the last weekend for 2021 Safe Surrender.** It operates Friday July 16 and Saturday July 17 from 9:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.