



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Columbus Temporarily Suspends Collection Activity on City Debt

COLUMBUS – The City of Columbus announced today that it is temporarily suspending collections on delinquent city income tax, public utility and EMS transportation fees in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis.

The City's Division of Income Tax, as part of the City Auditor's Office, will not forward new cases to the City Attorney's Office for filing in small claims court and will not mail new bills or audit letters to individual or business taxpayers for at least 30 days.

"The COVID-19 epidemic will impact every sector of the Columbus economy, and already, small businesses and hourly workers are facing economic crisis," said Columbus City Auditor Megan Kilgore. "Granting flexibility to taxpayers in meeting their obligations isn't just the right thing to do, it's economically imperative."

The Internal Revenue Service has issued guidance extending the deadline to file and pay 2019 tax returns to July 15. The Division of Income Tax is anticipating aligning with guidance from the Ohio Tax Commissioner regarding the extension of the time to file and pay 2019 individual and corporate city tax returns. An announcement will be made once this guidance is issued.

The Columbus Department of Public Utilities sends delinquent closed water and electric accounts directly to third-party collections agencies after the department's efforts to collect on these accounts have been exhausted.

"The City of Columbus does not want to make difficult times more difficult for those least able to meet the financial demands during this crisis," said Mayor Andrew J. Ginther. "We need to provide resources and programs that support families. Together, we will enjoy brighter days ahead."

The City Attorney's Office works with debtors and third-party collection agencies to establish payment plans for individuals with debt resulting from unpaid city accounts and judgments in small claims court cases. The City Attorney's Office will not refer new cases to the collection agencies for the next 30 days. Those who are on an existing payment plan for City-related debts will still be expected to follow their repayment plans. Individuals who cannot make payments due to COVID-19-related hardship should contact their collection agency and request to temporarily discontinue payments. The City Attorney's Office will reassess the state of collections again in 30 days.

"The coronavirus has, and will continue to, impact the finances of many families in Columbus and across our state," said Columbus City Attorney Zach Klein. "We understand the many challenges

people are facing and want to do our part to offer folks relief and compassion at this difficult time. We all must work together to get through this.”

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