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PRESS RELEASE

May 4, 2023

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Statement of the Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys on Criminal Justice Issues in St. Louis City

The Missouri Association of Prosecuting Attorneys (MAPA) opposes House Bill 301 that would appoint a separate prosecutor to handle homicides and a handful of other serious violent crimes cases in St. Louis City. That bill would fundamentally change a system of locally elected prosecutors that has served the citizens of Missouri well since 1875. More importantly, the bill does not provide a long-term solution to the serious issues impacting the criminal justice system in the City of St. Louis. The public safety of St. Louisans is essential—changes must immediately occur across all entities of the criminal justice system in the city, including the St. Louis Circuit Attorney's Office.

The Circuit Attorney's Office desperately needs immediate organizational and leadership improvements to restore the office's ability to fulfill its responsibilities. A national expert on organizational structures of prosecutors' offices should be immediately engaged to analyze the current state of the office and recommend a plan for the office to return to fulfilling its critical role in pursuing public safety and justice for victims. MAPA welcomes a plan that includes recommendations on the best way for this Association to provide resources and assistance.

A necessary component of the plan is that Prosecutor Gardner recognize the need to develop and implement the recommendations. The success of any plan hinges on whether Prosecutor Gardner will implement those recommendations or whether circumstances dictate that it is best for the office, the people of St. Louis, and for her, to resign.

"Prosecutors should be mindful of their responsibility to seek justice. Should a prosecutor find himself or herself in a situation in which the public trust in the office has diminished to the extent that he or she can no longer fulfill that primary responsibility, resignation should be considered." *Nat'l Prosecution Standards*, Standard 1-4.7, Commentary, at p.13 (Nat'l Dist. Att'y's Ass'n 4th ed. 2023).

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