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For Immediate Release

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Response to ACLU Allegations on Room and Board Funds

Unlike the release today from the state ACLU, Sheriff Tony Thompson will gladly, openly and transparently release information on how confessions of judgements are used for monies owed to taxpayers for reimbursement for serving sentences in the Black Hawk County Jail, and why minimal amounts of Black Hawk County room and board revenue is used for “recreational purposes” within his agency.

In full accordance with the provisions of Iowa Code 356.7, Sheriff Thompson has determined that \$70.00 per day to reimburse for room, board, electricity, sewer, water and other ancillary fees associated with an inmate keeping once sentenced to serve time is appropriate. Upon the advice of counsel, and pursuant to a change to the law in 2020, the State of Iowa amended the manner in which county sheriff's offices enforce inmate payment of administrative costs for room and board. Such charges could no longer be assessed in the inmate's underlying criminal cases. Rather, a county sheriff is now required to file a claim with the clerk of court. This claim must be filed as a civil action.

When inmates are released from the Black Hawk County Jail, they receive a statement as to what is owed and are given the option of signing a confession of judgment and, if desired, entering into a payment plan for all or a portion of outstanding administrative costs and room and board. Inmates are not required to sign confessions of judgement, to

**A CRIMINAL CHARGE IS MERELY AN ACCUSATION AND THE DEFENDANT IS PRESUMED
INNOCENT UNTIL AND UNLESS PROVEN GUILTY.**

enter into payment plans, or to agree to the amount owed for administrative costs or room and board fees.

Further, as to the sheriff's discretion (in accordance with Iowa Code 356.7) on how some of the nominal expenditures of these collections were spent, through promoting days where officers can spend time with their families and the community, dispelling myths about the office, ensuring better education of the public, and better informing their families of how to maintain their own safety, we find these days to be fulfilling, rewarding, and important to the total wellness and investment in a more inclusive, forthright and selflessly serving staff.

By including the public in some of these days, we also transparently demonstrate to our communities the tools and resources that we provide to them, we create dialogue and relationships and build commonality amongst neighbors and foundationally establish reliability in our agency without stigma, and without any drama. These are all force multipliers for our organization.

"It seems ironic that the ACLU would call this practice into question when these are the very actions and the law enforcement model that they have been demanding since George Floyd, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, and beyond. Further, it also seems disingenuous to have these very programs be paid for by the hard-working taxpayers when they are the ones who are already victimized by the offender. When they pay for their stay in jail, they are helping fund training for the law enforcement profession, families, and our communities by providing programming that destigmatizes the profession of law enforcement just a bit. We all recognize that better trained, healthier, emotionally sound officers are a benefit to all citizens, public and inmate alike." says Sheriff Tony Thompson.

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