



OFFICE OF THE RAMSEY COUNTY ATTORNEY

John J. Choi

TO: Adult Trial Division, Pretrial Justice Division, Youth Justice & Wellness Division, and Victim, Witness & Postconviction Justice Division Attorneys

FROM: John Choi, Ramsey County Attorney *J.C.*

DATE: September 8, 2021

RE: *Charging Policy Regarding Non-Public-Safety Traffic Stops*

I. BACKGROUND

It is the duty and obligation of our office to protect the constitutional rights of every Ramsey County resident and to ensure the law is enforced equitably. It has long been the value of our office to critically evaluate cases, safeguard the rights of those impacted by the legal system, and eliminate practices that cause disparate outcomes. This policy reflects those values while increasing the focus on public safety.

In order to protect public safety and maintain the public's trust and confidence, we must ensure that no segment of our community is disproportionately impacted by our practices in the justice system. The longstanding custom and practice of law enforcement pulling people over for non-public-safety reasons (like traffic code violations) as a pretext to search their vehicles for potential contraband disproportionately impacts people of color and those in under-resourced communities, who are most often subject to these stops. Such stops seldom yield contraband but come at a great cost to our community by diminishing its trust and confidence in law enforcement, which is essential to successful community policing.^{1 2 3}

Non-public-safety stops have similar effects as other discretionary police tactics, such as the disavowed "stop and frisk" practices that impacted millions of Black and Latinx people in major cities across this country. Using such stops enables conscious and unconscious bias to influence law enforcement officers' discretion, which results in targeting people based on perceptions of

¹ Policing Project, NYU School of Law, An Assessment of Traffic Stops and Policing Strategies in Nashville.

² The Stanford Open Policing Project; <https://openpolicing.stanford.edu/>

³ *Racial Profiling*, American Civil Liberties Union, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/racial-justice/race-and-criminal-justice/racial-profiling> (last visited on June 24, 2020).

345 Wabasha Street North, Suite 120 • Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102-1432

TELEPHONE: 651-266-3079 • FAX: 651-266-3015