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May 23, 2025

Col. Oscar Perez
Chief of Police
Providence Police Department
325 Washington Street
Providence, RI 02903

Dear Col. Perez:

Our office has received a number of inquiries from individuals who have been participants in the highly publicized protests taking place outside of Butler Hospital. They have raised concerns about the police department's response to those protests. I am writing to you in response to one specific aspect of these concerns: the citations that have been issued to some people for violations of the City's noise ordinance. Because these tickets provide clearly inaccurate and misleading information, I write to ask that you rescind any such tickets that have been issued.

I have attached for your reference a copy of one such ticket. As you will see, the person was cited for violating a noise ordinance provision dealing with the use of sound amplification equipment, Section 16-105. In the space indicating the fine associated with the citation, the officer has indicated that the fine is \$500. The inclusion of this amount is significant because the back of the citation advises recipients that if the fine is listed, they can avoid the necessity of a court hearing by paying that amount.

The problem is that the \$500 figure is simply wrong. Under the penalty provisions of the noise ordinance, Section 16-106, the fine for a first violation, if the person does not seek to contest a ticket, is \$200. A fine for a second violation is \$300. If a person contests the citation, the ordinance gives a court the authority to issue a fine of *up to* \$500. Whether to impose that maximum penalty is, of course, a matter for the court, not a police officer, to decide. In other words, there is no basis for an officer to be indicating that the fine for a noise violation is \$500.

As a result of this clearly misleading information, it is possible that a person might either pay this erroneously high figure of \$500 in order to avoid the burden of a court hearing or else decide to contest the ticket in court based on the incorrect size of the fine they have been told they must otherwise pay.

Because both these options are untenable, we ask that you rescind any tickets that have been issued to protesters this past week if they contain this incorrect fine information. We would also ask that you take the time at an upcoming roll call to make sure officers are aware of the actual penalties for noise violations and, just as importantly, for any other violations for which they issue

citations. In light of this situation, we fear there may be other civil violations where police are similarly providing inaccurate information about the penalties.

I would appreciate your prompt attention to this matter, and look forward to hearing back from you about it. Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steven Brown". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steven" and last name "Brown" clearly distinguishable.

Steven Brown
Executive Director

cc: Jeff Dana, City Solicitor
Rachel Miller, City Council President

Enclosure

SUMMONS # MC 075721

☐ POLICE / ☒ ENVIRONMENTAL

CITY OF PROVIDENCE UNIVERSAL MUNICIPAL COURT SUMMONS

THE UNDERSIGNED OFFICER STATES THAT:

ON:

MONTH DAY YEAR TIME

LOCATION:

AT (roads, street address, waterway):

LAST NAME

SEX JUV

FIRST NAME

DOB

ADDRESS

CITY

STATE ZIP CODE

OPERATORS LICENSE NUMBER

STATE

DID UNLAWFULLY (CAUSE TO BE) OPERATE(D) A VESSEL / MOTOR VEHICLE:

REG. NUMBER YEAR STATE PASS ☐ COMM ☐ MAKE TYPE CLR DOORS
OTHER

SERIAL NUMBER / VIN

OWNED BY (LAST) (FIRST) (INITIAL)

ADDRESS (NUMBER) (STREET) (CITY) (STATE) (ZIP)

ROAD COND. VESSEL DOCUMENTATION ZONED SPEED ACTUAL SPEED TYPE
TYPE:

OFFENSES

ORDINANCE #

1. use of sound
2. Amplifying equipment
- 3.

16-105

COMMENTS

ISSUED same violation
on 5-15-25

CCR

SIGNATURE ISSUING OFFICER

ID NUMBER

CCR 25-37138

TOW COMPANY

491

OFFENDER'S SIGNATURE

\$ 500.00

REFUSED

DATE

5-28-25

OFFENDER