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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Mercer County Prosecutor Warns of Phone Scam

Mercer County Prosecutor Angelo Onofri wants to warn the public of a telephone scam where a caller falsely claimed to be a law enforcement Officer employed by the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office.

On April 20, 2023, the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office, Cyber Crimes Unit, was contacted by the Cranbury Township Police Department in Middlesex County and advised that a victim reported that they received a call from a number purporting to be the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office and the caller falsely claimed to be "Sergeant Whitlock" with the Mercer County Prosecutor's Office. The scammer claimed the resident had a warrant for their arrest and directed the victim to drive to a drugstore to purchase gift cards.

As a reminder, law enforcement will never ask for payment of any type over the phone, nor will they ask for personal identifying information that could be used for fraudulent purposes. Law enforcement, government agencies, and courts will never ask you to pay by unusual methods, such as gift cards, wire transfer, or cryptocurrency.

Scammers often research their potential victims on the internet and social media. Scammers will call and deceive their victims into thinking the callers are law enforcement officers, prosecutors or police employees. Scammers may spoof a law enforcement telephone number, falsely showing on the victim's caller ID. Spoofed phone numbers are typically done through a VPN (Virtual Private Network) making it difficult for law

enforcement to track the actual caller. The scammers may threaten their victims with arrest for outstanding warrants or other legal issues.

Should you receive a call from a police department within Mercer County and/or the Prosecutor's Office, please confirm with whom you are speaking. If you believe you received a scam telephone call, hang up and call the main phone number to the police department or Prosecutor's Office (609-989-6351). If legitimate, you'll be connected with a Police Dispatcher or receptionist who can verify the caller's identity. Report any scam calls to your local law enforcement agency.

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