

# JULIA R. BATES

LUCAS COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

LUCAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 700 ADAMS STREET, SUITE 250, TOLEDO, OHIO 43604-5659

TELEPHONE (419) 213-4700 / FACSIMILE (419) 213-4595

July 9, 2024

## CONTACT

Steve Slivka  
Lucas County Prosecutor's Office  
Public Information Officer  
419-213-4848

Sarah Elms  
Board of Lucas County Commissioners  
Communications Director  
419-213-4526

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Lucas County Prosecutor's Office Announces Creation of Conviction Integrity Unit

**TOLEDO, Ohio** – In conjunction with the Board of Lucas County Commissioners, Lucas County Prosecuting Attorney Julia R. Bates announced today the formation of a Conviction Integrity Unit. This new unit highlights the LCPO's dedication to serving the citizens of Lucas County by ensuring justice for crime victims while maintaining fairness for all individuals charged with criminal offenses.

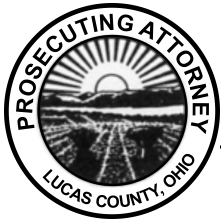
The CIU will review past convictions for credible claims of actual innocence. This unit will conduct collaborative and thorough case reviews to uphold the integrity of convictions. If a wrongful conviction is identified, the LCPO commits to taking prompt corrective action in accordance with the law.

"Our office researched similar units across the State of Ohio in Cuyahoga, Franklin and Summit Counties, as well as Wayne County, Michigan, with input from the University of Pennsylvania's Quattrone Center," Bates said. "The unit we created pulled elements from all of those units."

To initiate a review, an approved referral source within the LCPO must refer a case to the CIU. When called upon, the CIU will review old cases for factors such as overlooked evidence, eyewitness misidentification, junk science, false convictions, ineffective assistance of counsel and prosecutorial or law enforcement misconduct.

"The COVID-19 pandemic provided a chance for our office to take a step back, re-evaluate how we operate and improve," Bates said.

The unit will consider cases meeting the following criteria: the defendant is currently incarcerated and living, was convicted of a felony offense involving violence, was convicted at trial in the Lucas County Court of Common Pleas, presents a credible, non-frivolous claim of actual innocence or wrongful conviction supported by new evidence and has no pending appeals or other post-conviction litigation. The unit will not accept cases involving guilty or no contest pleas unless they present rare and extraordinary circumstances.



# JULIA R. BATES

LUCAS COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY

LUCAS COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 700 ADAMS STREET, SUITE 250, TOLEDO, OHIO 43604-5659

TELEPHONE (419) 213-4700 / FACSIMILE (419) 213-4595

"We've seen through criminal justice reform that sometimes the system doesn't work and doesn't get convictions right," Commissioner Pete Gerken said. "It happens. To say it never happens would be foolish. So, it's worth the time and taxpayers' money to set up a unit to make sure we get convictions right and protect everybody."

Once the Review Board and the Elected Prosecutor receive the written reports, they will meet to evaluate the case and consider appropriate actions in its final decision. The final decision will include a statement of the findings related to the claim of actual innocence or wrongful conviction. If the Review Board and Elected Prosecutor find the conviction to be unsound or worthy of relief, a plan of action may include but is not limited to: a joint petition to the trial court for appointment of counsel to pursue a motion for a new trial or other post-conviction relief; a pardon or other relief as this may be appropriate given the procedural history of the case.

"We owe it to every resident, judge, prosecutor, attorney, and family member to make sure every conviction in Lucas County is thoroughly reviewed," Commissioner Lisa Sobecki said. "With this new unit, we now have a process in place for cases with question marks. I want to thank the prosecutor's office for its work to make sure we treat every single case with the dignity it deserves."

The ultimate decision to pursue relief in each case is a matter that rests solely within the discretion of the Lucas County Prosecuting Attorney. The prosecutor's decision is not subject to further review or appeal to any court.

"Over the past several years, we've had a number of local cases where convictions were questioned and, in some instances, overturned," Commissioner Anita Lopez said. "Putting in place a process where we establish with absolute certainty, the veracity of our convictions, will only improve trust between our residents and government."

The CIU is initially reviewing five cases.