



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Thursday, July 30, 2020

Contacts:

Ori Hoffer, ori.hoffer@georgetown.edu, 435-602-9421

Mike Ceraso, michaelceraso@gmail.com

NEW PROJECT USES DATA TO REDUCE BIAS AND IMPROVE FAIRNESS IN CRIMINAL PROSECUTIONS

*Former federal prosecutor who prosecuted the police killing of Walter Scott in South Carolina
leads new project examining role of prosecutors in the criminal justice system*

Washington, D.C. -- As the nation continues to reckon with the role of police in public safety, the [Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation](#) at Georgetown University announced a new effort, the [Data + Justice Project](#), taking a closer look at the unique role that prosecutors play. A joint project between the Justice Innovation Lab and the Beeck Center will assist Solicitor Scarlett Wilson and the Ninth Circuit Solicitor's Office in Charleston, South Carolina, with collecting data and using qualitative and quantitative analysis to improve the fairness of prosecutorial decision-making.

The project is led by [Jared Fishman](#), a 14-year veteran of the U.S. Department of Justice, where he led civil rights prosecutions on police misconduct, including the police killing of [Walter Scott](#) in North Charleston, SC, as well as prosecutions of hate crimes and human trafficking in over 20 jurisdictions across the United States. Jared recently launched the [Justice Innovation Lab](#), an independent research effort that will develop a data-informed approach to address systemic inequities and improve the effectiveness and fairness of the criminal justice system.

"Local prosecutors play an essential role in the criminal justice system, making the decisions that determine who goes to jail and for how long," **Fishman said**. "However, most prosecutors across the United States are still making crucial decisions based on 'gut' and personal experience instead of data and clear guidelines. Inevitably, this leads to biases in decision-making. Solicitor Wilson wants her prosecutors to do better and we can help her with that. A data-informed process empowers prosecutors to make fairer decisions. You can't fix

what you don't measure. We chose to work with Solicitor Wilson because she is committed to changing the old ways of the system and ensuring a fairer process so that true justice is done.”

This summer has launched many conversations about racial justice and the critical need to reform the criminal justice system. Local prosecutors play a uniquely powerful role in the criminal justice system and are key players in any effective reform effort. As a part-time fellow at the Beeck Center, and in conjunction with Justice Innovation Lab, Jared will pilot research with the Ninth Circuit Solicitor's office in Charleston, South Carolina, led by Solicitor Scarlett Wilson. Together, they will analyze existing prosecutorial data and design and implement policy interventions to improve the fairness of prosecutorial decision-making. Jared will follow the interventions, documenting the results and publishing reports on the findings, and will promote the work to other jurisdictions who can scale these approaches for a fairer process.

Solicitor Wilson stated, “With this partnership and these experts, we are poised to lead the country in detecting and correcting bias. This sort of accountability will not only help the public, but also the criminal justice system as a whole. We know that unconscious or implicit bias runs deep in every corner of this country. Discovering biases in our criminal justice system will not be shocking. Doing all we can to eliminate those biases — implicit or otherwise — is our highest priority.”

Additionally, Fishman and Wilson are working with researchers from Loyola University at Chicago, the George Washington University Law School, and the Toulouse School of Economics to collect and analyze the data.

The project is part of the Beeck Center's work to rebuild trust in public and private institutions by centering the public good in policy and practice. The Center is home to a number of action-oriented research projects examining how data and technology can improve systems that work for people who are often overlooked and left behind.

###

If you are interested in speaking with Jared Fishman or Solicitor Scarlett Wilson, contact Ori Hoffer, Beeck Center Director of Influence +Communications, at ori.hoffer@georgetown.edu.