



MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN

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MAYOR BYRON W. BROWN LAUNCHES NEXT PHASE OF THE BUFFALO REFORM AGENDA

The latest phase of Mayor Brown's comprehensive effort to implement sensible and effective reforms, will give people more time to address minor vehicle equipment issues, end certain vehicle fines and stop the release of mugshots to the public

Buffalo, NY—Mayor Byron W. Brown announced the next phase of the Buffalo Reform Agenda, a comprehensive approach to police and criminal justice reform in the City of Buffalo. This phase will extend the number of days people have to make minor vehicle repairs for "fix-it" tickets to 14-days and introduce legislation to the Common Council that would repeal the 15 vehicle ordinances that were introduced and passed in 2018.

Mayor Brown said, "This new round of reforms under the Buffalo Reform Agenda will help address how certain vehicle and traffic ordinances, as well as their enforcement, have had a negative impact on Black and low-income residents in the City of Buffalo. While vehicle and traffic safety is important, laws aimed at making our streets safer must be reviewed to ensure that they do not unintentionally place a burden on members of communities of color and low-income residents who were already struggling to make ends meet. We do not want minor traffic violations to contribute to the circumstances that could send a family spiraling deeper into financial difficulty. These reforms will also benefit all residents who are experiencing financial challenges caused by the COVID-19 global health pandemic."

Today, the City is extending the amount of time an individual has to correct an issue after they have been cited for a minor vehicle equipment violation by the Buffalo Police Department from seven to 14-days. This is the second extension the Mayor has issued after hearing from the community. The first extension—made earlier this year—was from 24-hours to seven days. The 14-day period aligns with the average pay period and allows residents more time to correct equipment violations and therefore avoid paying a fine.

The Mayor is also working with the Common Council to repeal the 15 vehicle fines that were enacted in 2018. Those ordinances, originally intended to enhance vehicle and traffic safety, have been made obsolete by the installation of school zone cameras, bus arm cameras, and other technology solutions which will make City streets safer and cause motorists to lower their driving speeds. The Mayor is pleased to work with the Common Council, especially the legislation's sponsor South District Councilmember Christopher Scanlon and co-sponsors North District Councilmember Joe Golombek and Masten District Councilmember Ulysees Wingo, to enact the repeals, which he will sign into law at the earliest possible opportunity.

Finally, the Mayor has made permanent the policy of not releasing booking photographs, or “mugshots”, to the public after the policy went through a trial period last year. In accordance with new authority granted to local law enforcement agencies in last year’s State Budget (Chapter 59 of the Laws of 2019, Part GGG), the City of Buffalo Police Department stopped releasing booking photographs to the public unless there was a specific or urgent public safety reason. That policy will now be made the standing policy of the Department going forward. The release of individuals’ booking photographs, taken before they had been convicted of any crime, often contributed to racially biased perceptions of crime and reinforced prejudicial stereotypes.

“I want to thank Mayor Brown and my colleagues on the Buffalo Common Council for collaborating on this newest round of reforms,” said South District Council Member Christopher Scanlon. “As law makers, it is important that we put in place the mechanisms to hold people accountable for their actions, however we must do so while not being overtly punitive. Advancements in technology, coupled with other city initiatives, have created the opportunity for us to revisit past practices to ensure we are not causing further financial or emotional distress to the residents of the City of Buffalo. I look forward to continuing our discussions on reforms in order to create a more unified Buffalo for all.”

Councilmember Golombek said, “I want to thank Mayor Brown for doing the hard work of reform as well as including and working with Councilmembers to actually enact reform. Talk is cheap and it is actual accomplishments that are what matters now.”

Councilmember Wingo said, “Repealing 15 vehicle fines added in 2018 and extending the fix-it ticket deadline, particularly on the heels of the expiration of the \$600 unemployment bonus, is another big step in the right direction as Mayor Brown and the Common Council collaborate to propose policy changes that reflect the will of the people.”

This is the fourth announcement the Mayor has made under the Buffalo Reform Agenda. The earlier reforms focused on increasing transparency, issuing appearance tickets instead of detaining people for low-level and non-violent crimes, providing amnesty programs for residents who are struggling economically, adjusting fines and fees based on incomes and enhancing public outreach and public information efforts regarding police policy and procedure in the City of Buffalo. More information on the Buffalo Reform Agenda can be found at: www.buffalony.gov/reformagenda.

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