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Florida Attorney General's Office News Release

AG Moody Encourages Increase in Law Enforcement Mentorships

TALLAHASSEE, Fla.—Attorney General Ashley Moody today announced a joint partnership with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, Florida Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles, and Big Brothers Big Sisters to encourage law enforcement to join the Bigs in Blue mentorship program. Attorney General Moody, FDLE Commissioner Rick Swearingen and FLHSMV Executive Director Terry Rhodes each sent a memo to their respective agencies encouraging staff to participate in the Bigs in Blue program by spending an hour a week mentoring at-risk kids and teens using an existing state administrative leave policy.

Attorney General Ashley Moody said, “The Bigs in Blue program is doing an incredible job building bonds between law enforcement and youth by showing children that an officer’s job is to protect them and their families. I saw firsthand the impact that this program has on the communities it serves when I presented a Back the Blue Award to Big Brothers Big Sisters of Tampa Bay. Since then, I’ve been inspired to find a way to encourage more participation in this great program. I can’t wait to see the impact this program will have once we have even more law enforcement officers across the state participating. It is vital to our state that we do everything in our power to build trust and respect between law enforcement and the communities they serve.”

Florida Department of Law Enforcement Commissioner Rick Swearingen said, “FDLE members often volunteer in our communities, and Attorney General Moody’s efforts to bolster this program will provide additional opportunities for our members to serve others while building relationships between at-risk children and law enforcement.”

Florida Highway Patrol Director Col. Gene Spaulding said, “Mentorship programs provide ongoing impactful relationships between law enforcement and the communities that we serve as well as the guidance needed for the future leaders of law enforcement in our state. It is an honor to collaborate with Attorney General Ashley Moody and our law enforcement partners on the ‘Bigs in Blue’ initiative.”

President and CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters of America Pam Iorio said, “Attorney General Moody’s Bigs in Blue statewide initiative will enable more members of our law enforcement community to mentor young people, to bridge a divide that often exists between law enforcement and the communities they serve. Big Brothers Big Sisters is proud to partner with the Attorney General, FDLE and FLHSMV.”

Attorney General Moody, FDLE Commissioner Swearingen and FLHSMV Executive Director Rhodes are encouraging use of an existing state administrative leave policy, the Governor’s Mentoring Initiative. A state employee can take one hour a week, and up to five hours per month, as administrative leave for mentoring, tutoring, guest speaking, or participating in an established

mentoring program, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, Guardian Ad Litem, Senior Corps and Adult Literacy.

Big Brothers Big Sisters founded the Bigs in Blue mentoring program that focuses on pairing law enforcement personnel as one-on-one mentors to children in the communities they serve. The program has paired more than 3,000 children with mentors since its creation in 2017. The agency’s mission is: to provide children facing adversity with professionally supported, one-to-one mentoring relationships that will change their lives for the better, forever.