

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF THE FIFTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT
IN AND FOR HERNANDO COUNTY**

ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER NO.: H-2024-29

**ADMINISTRATIVE ORDER FOR OPERATION "SUMMER SCOOP"
JULY 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, AND 22, 2024 IN HERNANDO COUNTY**

WHEREAS, persons arrested and charged with crimes or violations of municipal or county ordinances have a right to be released from jail custody on reasonable bond, if the offense is bondable and there are no circumstances adverse to release; and,

WHEREAS, the Supreme Court of Florida issued Administrative Order No.: AOSC23-88 IN RE: UNIFORM STATEWIDE BOND SCHEDULE, on December 12, 2023, to be effective **January 1, 2024**; and,

WHEREAS, the uniform statewide bond schedule "applies when the police or county jail or pretrial release employees exercise their discretion to release a person on bond before that person's first appearance hearing[.]" and "shall not bind a judge in an individual case who is conducting a first appearance hearing or bail determination[;]" and,

WHEREAS, AOSC23-88 provides that the Chief Judge may establish a local bond schedule that adds conditions of release and/or increases the bond amount above those required by the Uniform Statewide Bond Schedule; and,

WHEREAS, the Florida Supreme Court, pursuant to Rule 2.215(5) of the Florida Rules of Judicial Administration permits the Chief Judge to designate a judge in any court or court division as an Administrative Judge; and,

WHEREAS, the Hernando County Sheriff's Office, in connection with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, various other Sheriff's Offices, and law enforcement agencies, are conducting an undercover internet operation in an attempt to investigate internet crimes and individuals who arrange meetings with children over the internet to engage in sexual activity designated "Operation Summer Scoop"; and,

WHEREAS, individuals may travel from outside Hernando County to an undisclosed location within Hernando County for the purpose of committing criminal activity of the type targeted by Operation Summer Scoop, and be arrested July 17 through and including July 22, 2024; and

WHEREAS, there is a compelling concern that a person who is arrested as a result of Operation Summer Scoop when released on bond will access the internet, and he/she would electronically post and disseminate information about the undercover operation over the internet to

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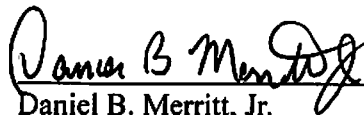
other individuals, and such actions would reveal the existence of this undercover operation, as well as potentially endanger the law enforcement officers involved; and,

WHEREAS, in order to preserve the integrity of the ongoing investigation, as well as the safety of the law enforcement officers involved in the Operation, it is necessary to add certain uniform conditions of pre-trial release and bonds for the individuals arrested as a result of the Operation; therefore it is,

HEREBY ORDERED that the following conditions of pre-trial release apply to individuals arrested in connection with Operation Summer Scoop:

1. In accordance with Administrative Order A-2024-02 RE: the Fifth Judicial Circuit Bond Schedule, no bond is available before first appearance for defendants alleged to have violated §§847.0135 and/or 847.0138, Florida Statutes. Further, due to the nature and probability of danger that the release of a defendant charged as a result of Operation Summer Scoop would pose to the community, it is deemed appropriate by the undersigned that the Defendant should have to post at minimum a bond of \$25,000.00 per count brought under Fla. Stat. §847.0135 and/or Fla. Stat. §847.0138.
2. The following special conditions should also be considered, subject to the discretion of the First Appearance Judge, to apply to those individuals arrested as a result Operation Summer Scoop and otherwise eligible for pre-trial release as found in paragraph 1. immediately above:
 - a. Defendant shall have no contact with any child under the age of 18 years.
 - b. Defendant shall not possess or utilize any computers or electronic devices capable of connecting to the internet.
3. **Nothing in this Administrative Order abrogates the duty of the Court at First Appearance under 3.131, Florida Rules of Criminal Procedure to impose conditions of release that will reasonably protect the community from risk of physical harm to persons, assure the presence of the accused at trial, or assure the integrity of the judicial process.**
4. This Administrative Order shall be Sealed until July 29, 2024, in order to preserve the integrity of an ongoing criminal investigation and the safety of the law enforcement officers involved.

DONE AND ORDERED, in Brooksville, Hernando County, Florida, this 15th day of July 2024.


Daniel B. Merritt, Jr.
Administrative Judge
Hernando County