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National Association for Shoplifting Prevention (NASP) Supports Retailers Offering Shoplifter Education as a Voluntary Alternative to Entry into the Criminal Justice System for First-time, Low-level Offenders

Melville, NY, August 17, 2017 - Recent events in California present an opportunity to examine the concept of private industry working with the public sector to find and deliver better responses to crime in our nation, in this case, low-level and juvenile shoplifting. It is our view that it is not about any particular provider or their procedures. We believe that there is much more at stake for retailers. This is about the retailer's rights and prerogative as private citizens who are repeatedly victimized by shoplifting offenders (to the tune of \$30 million annually) to seek a better solution. It is about the retail community's value in collaborating with and providing resources to the public sector to offer and establish a better response to the problem than those currently available – which are simply inadequate and therefore ineffective in reducing recidivism - a primary imperative of the criminal justice system.

“This is by no means an indictment of the underfunded and overburdened criminal justice system. Shrinking financial resources coupled with evolving and growing community concerns leaves the system unable to stretch their resources to handle every low-level crime with the full weight of the system, which is understandable,” said Caroline Kochman, NASP Executive Director. Kochman points out that this leaves most low-level crime – and specifically shoplifting – unaddressed and unpunished. While this saves resources, it “sends a dangerous message to offenders that this particular crime does pay and the risk is so minimal that it is worth the reward.”

Shrinking resources and an over-crowded criminal justice system is not a new problem for the public sector. To mitigate the impact on their effectiveness, many communities have successfully privatized certain aspects of the criminal justice system thus alleviating the burden on the public sector and stretching their limited resources – outsourced probation services is just one example.

The National Association for Shoplifting Prevention is in full support of retailers offering effective, offense-specific education to offenders as a voluntary alternative to entry into the criminal justice system. This effort to provide a progressive new tool to save time and resources for both sectors, while holding willing offenders accountable in reasonable proportion to their offense, is a game-changer for communities in their ongoing struggle to reduce recidivism and petty shoplifting in their stores and communities.

Further, it is NASP's aim to help communities recognize that retailers and their LP teams have no obligation to invest their own time and resources in taking on what is traditionally the imperative of criminal justice. However, as good partners to the communities where they do business, the most forward thinking retailers are doing just that. These retailers recognize that they are all part of the same community and if alleviating the burden on law enforcement and criminal justice resources while helping to reduce recidivism provides value to the community, then it is a value to them as part of that community.

It is important, however, to note that any such educational program must be implemented in partnership with the community, with the criminal justice system, even with the offenders themselves; a partnership in which each participant contributes effort and reaps benefits in equal measure. This is the hallmark of a sustainable, cooperative and effective solution to the collective community challenges caused by unchecked shoplifting in our stores and communities.