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## **Illinois Policymakers Take Bold Action to Support Businesses and Foster Opportunities for Formerly Incarcerated Individuals**

Small businesses struggle to hire and retain employees and formerly incarcerated individuals, many of whom learn valuable skills while incarcerated, have difficulty connecting with businesses and finding employment. The Small Business Advocacy Council and Workers Center for Racial Justice has championed legislation to provide increased incentives to businesses that hire formerly incarcerated individuals to offset the costs of onboarding and on-the-job training. We are excited to announce the General Assembly passed, and Governor Pritzker signed, legislation that significantly increases tax credits for businesses that hire returning citizens.

The new law increases the allowable tax credit available for businesses that hire formerly incarcerated individuals from 5% to 15% of qualified wages and raises the ceiling for these incentives from \$1500 to \$7500. Now is the time to spread the message about this change to businesses across Illinois!

The following statements highlight the tremendous opportunities associated with these increased tax incentives:

"This is a practical program that recognizes today's reality", said Senate President Don Harmon. "It provides business solutions to the worker shortage while at the same time offering employment opportunities so people can meaningfully reconnect with their communities. I'm proud to have been a supporter and applaud the advocates and sponsors for their efforts."

"Empowering the formerly incarcerated with opportunities isn't just about second chances – it's about rewriting narratives, mending communities, and building a future where redemption and contribution outweighs past mistakes," said Senate Majority Appropriations Leader Elgie R. Sims, Jr. (D-Chicago). "Hiring formerly incarcerated individuals is a strategic move for businesses and a catalyst for economic growth, unlocking untapped potential and fostering a more inclusive and resilient workforce."

"I am proud to support a budget that prioritizes working Illinoisans and small businesses, which are cornerstones in our communities," said Chief Senate Sponsor, Leader Laura Murphy (D-Des Plaines). "This investment will help many small businesses in our state thrive and help those reentering get back on their feet."

"If we want to address the issues of recidivism and uplift communities, we have to responsibly connect returning individuals with job opportunities that enable them to support themselves and pursue a better path forward," said Speaker Pro Tempore/Chief Budgeteer Leader Gordon-Booth. "Increasing relevant tax credits helps small businesses, spurs economic development, and opens doors for people who deserve the opportunity to reenter the workforce."

"Expanding the tax credit for formerly incarcerated individuals is a crucial step towards providing them with the support they need to successfully reintegrate into society," said Chairman and Chief Co-Sponsor Carol Ammons. "By offering financial relief and encouraging substantial employment, we are investing in small businesses and the future of returning citizens by increasing a more inclusive and just community."

"This law will support small businesses struggling to hire employees, foster opportunities for formerly incarcerated individuals, proactively improve public safety, reduce the costs of recidivism, and spark economic development in disinvested communities," said SBAC President Elliot Richardson. "We are thankful for the efforts of legislative leaders who drove the enactment of this legislation."

"This is a social and economic no brainer," said Antonio Lightfoot. "Currently, far too many Illinoisans are shut out of a good job simply because of their record. This will not only put money in the pockets of people who need it but strengthen the economy."

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