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County, City Join in Signing the White House Fair Chance Business Pledge *Fitzgerald, Peduto Call on Businesses to Eliminate Unnecessary Hiring Barriers*

PITTSBURGH – County Executive Rich Fitzgerald and City of Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto today signed the White House Fair Chance Business Pledge, and called on area businesses to join the county and city in eliminating unnecessary hiring barriers for individuals with criminal records. Allegheny County and the City of Pittsburgh have been public sector leaders in eliminating unnecessary hiring barriers to those who have paid their debt to society, and in connecting all those in low-income communities with educational and career opportunities.

"Our community only does well, moves forward and continues to succeed if we can all share in those successes," said Fitzgerald. "By providing opportunities for individuals with criminal histories to take alternate paths in their lives, we improve our community as well as have an impact on their lives and the lives of their families."

The county has been a national leader in providing employment and training services to inmates at the Allegheny County Jail offering them opportunities for careers and additional training that make it easier to reenter society following release. Inmates can receive training in culinary, machining, manufacturing, bricklaying and construction. The effort, coupled with the Allegheny County Jail's reentry programs and other pre-release services gives those incarcerated a fair chance at finding gainful employment and reducing the chance of recidivism.

Following a 2014 directive from President Barack Obama the City and County last year released their My Brother's Keeper Playbook. It used input from more than 100 leaders region-wide to develop long-term and strategic programs to improve the livelihood and development of all young people with a strong focus on young men and boys of color. The local MBK Committee identified current "keepers," defined as those individuals and organizations which already inspire minds, provide access to resources, are a model of success, and facilitate opportunities. Keepers also recognize that every individual has value by affirming that individual life experiences are powerful, productive and essential to crafting solutions for which they are accountable.

"I am proud to once again join with the White House and Allegheny County in an important effort to promote employment and inclusion," Mayor Peduto said. "While many private sector firms are already joining us in hiring workers who happen to have criminal backgrounds, the Fair Business Chance Pledge provides a reminder that we all still have much work to do."

Both the county and city have "ban the box" policies which delay criminal history questions until later in the hiring process to allow applicants to be judged on their education and experience and make it past initial steps in the hiring process. The city passed legislation in 2012 to prohibit the city and its contractors from asking job applicants about their criminal background history. The county's policy was set forth by the in November 2014. The ban the box initiative has also been the subject of discussion at numerous events and efforts, including the Corporate Equity Inclusion Roundtable.

Recently, the county and city have also signed on as partners for other initiatives aimed at allowing individuals with criminal histories more opportunity. In conjunction with Duquesne University School of Law, the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board, Pennsylvania Career Link of Pittsburgh/Allegheny County, Neighborhood Legal Services Association, the Pro Bono Center of the Allegheny County Bar Foundation, the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh and the U.S. Attorney's Office of the Western District of Pennsylvania, the city and county are partnering in a November 14th Expungement Day which will be held from 1-5:00 p.m. in the lobby of the City County Building.

The Expungement Day event will allow individuals to learn about the PA criminal expungement and new sealing process, helping those with criminal histories learn if they are eligible for either and also providing an opportunity to meet with volunteer attorneys to discuss if they qualify for free services. Partners will also provide information on career resources and share information on available employment opportunities throughout Allegheny County.

The White House Fair Chance Business Pledge was launched in April 2016. In addition to committing to providing individuals with criminal records a fair chance to participate in the economy, companies are also encouraged to make additional commitments including adopting "Ban the Box" policies, training human resources staff on making fair decisions, ensuring internships and job training are available to individuals with criminal records, using reliable background check providers, hosting a job fair, supplying tools for success, offering support to reentry facilities, and providing mentors to children of incarcerated parents. More information on the initiative, including an online pledge, can be found at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/criminal-justice/fair-chance-pledge>.

Joining the Executive and Mayor at today's event were Laura Ellsworth, Esq., Vice Chair of the Three Rivers Workforce Investment Board; Dr. Quintin Bullock, President of the Community College of Allegheny County; Alethia Bush, Director of the Center for Employment Opportunities; Esther Bush, President and CEO of the Urban League of Greater Pittsburgh; and, Tim Stevens, Convener of the Corporate Equity Inclusion Roundtable.

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