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For Immediate Release

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## **Reentry Bill Signed that Changes Lives**

*Governor Rauner Signs a Bill into Law that Removes Barriers to Employment*

**Decatur, Illinois August 25, 2016:** Yesterday, Governor Rauner signed SB42, which safeguards patients while restoring the opportunity for people with certain felony convictions to get a health professional license.

SB42 addresses the unintended consequences of 2011 legislation that stripped licenses from a number of Illinoisans for past crimes – regardless of how long ago the worker had been convicted or if the worker actually posed a risk to public safety. SB42 restores balance, allowing professionals with forcible felony convictions to petition the Department of Financial and Professional Regulation for a license and creating a 15 factor analysis the Department must apply to determine whether licensure is safe and appropriate.

The National Employment Law Project estimates about 42% of Illinois adults have a criminal record, and nearly half of American children have at least one parent with a criminal record.<sup>1</sup> Nonetheless, there are hundreds of employment barriers under Illinois law,<sup>2</sup> making it harder for the those with criminal records to find jobs and build financially secure lives for themselves and their families.

"This is a real step forward toward justice," said Senator Iris Martinez, who introduced the bill after hearing from constituents who had lost their license and could not get it back. "After years of work, I'm glad to see the measure become law."

Joining Senator Martinez in championing the bill was Camille Lilly, the house sponsor. The Restoring Rights and Opportunities Coalition of Illinois (RROCI) worked to advance the bill.

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<sup>1</sup> Center for American Progress, *Removing Barriers to Opportunity for Parent with Criminal Records and their Children*, December 2015, available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/292706218/Removing-Barriers-to-Opportunity-for-Parents-With-Criminal-Records-and-Their-Children>

<sup>2</sup> American Bar Association's National Inventory of Collateral Consequences of Conviction database, available at: <http://www.abacollateralconsequences.org/map/#>

“More and more, we are realizing that the harsh barriers to employment that we have created for people with criminal records do little to protect public safety; instead they drive recidivism and harm the very communities we aim to protect,” said Sam Tuttle, Policy Director at Heartland Alliance for Human Needs & Human Rights, a member of the RROCI Coalition. “We are proud to have been a part of helping SB42 becoming law.”

The legislation will go into effect on January 1, 2017, opening up opportunity for many Illinoisans.

“All I have ever wanted to do is be a nurse.” said LaTonya Anderson, a nurse who has been denied her license because of past conviction and member of Cabrini Green Legal Aid’s leadership council and the RROCI coalition. “SB42 will allow me that chance, and the chance to show my children that they can strive for their dreams.”

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**Heartland Alliance for Human Rights and Human Needs** – Heartland Alliance, one of the world’s leading anti-poverty organizations, works in communities in the U.S. and abroad to serve those who are homeless, living in poverty, or seeking safety. It provides a comprehensive array of services in the areas of health, housing, jobs and justice – and leads state and national policy efforts, which target lasting change for individuals and society. [www.heartlandalliance.org](http://www.heartlandalliance.org)

**Restoring Rights and Opportunities Coalition of Illinois (RROCI)** – RROCI is a coalition spearheaded the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Community Renewal Society, Cabrini Green Legal Aid, and Heartland Alliance for Human Needs and Human Rights. RROCI is committed to solutions driven with a community voice and believes that Illinois needs a fair system of justice that recognizes human dignity and that everyone deserves a meaningful future.

**Cabrini Green Legal Aid (CGLA)** – CGLA has been providing legal services to the community since 1973, working to improve opportunities by removing barriers, strengthening families and stabilizing housing. Over 7,000 people each access services that are focused on those negatively impacted by the criminal legal system. CGLA seeks to make an impact in individual lives, families and our communities through providing zealous legal advocacy and advocating for systemic change. [www.cgla.net](http://www.cgla.net).

**Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH)** – CCH is a statewide organization dedicated to advocating for policies that curb and ultimately end homelessness in Illinois. We organize people who have been impacted by homelessness including people with records, victims of trafficking, unaccompanied youth, low-wage workers, and families. CCH’s ultimate goal is to ensure that the most vulnerable in our society are treated with respect, dignity, and value. We are committed to eliminating the structural inequalities that serve as barriers to achieving that goal.

**Community Renewal Society** – Community Renewal Society (CRS) is a progressive, faith-based organization that works to eliminate race and class barriers. CRS informs, organizes and trains faith communities and individuals to advocate for social and economic justice. The FORCE (Fighting to Overcome Records and Create Equality) Project is an initiative of CRS led by people with records, their families, and faith allies organizing to create change and justice for people with records. [www.communityrenewalsociety.org](http://www.communityrenewalsociety.org)