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For Immediate Release

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Groundbreaking Sealing Expansion Bill Signed

Governor Rauner Signs a Bill into Law that Expands Eligibility for Sealing Convictions, Providing Thousands of Illinoisans with Better Opportunities

Chicago, Illinois August 24, 2017: Today, Governor Rauner signed HB2373, which creates better opportunities for people with criminal records by expanding the number of convictions that are eligible to be sealed under Illinois law. This legislation makes Illinois the nation's leader in removing collateral consequences for people impacted by the criminal system and focuses on reducing recidivism to ensure that Illinois families can achieve positive outcomes associated with stable housing, access to employment and educational options.

In Illinois, about 45% of adults have some sort of criminal record. People with criminal records are routinely denied opportunities for quality jobs, safe housing, and education. By expanding eligibility for sealing, HB 2373 will help Illinoisans with a criminal record reach their full potential. Sealing allows people to petition the court to remove records from public view and have an individualized decision made by a judge.

"I have been partnering with the Restoring Rights and Opportunities Coalition of Illinois (RROCI) and colleagues on both sides of the aisle for years to help fix our broken system of collateral consequences for those with criminal records," said Representative Camille Lilly, who championed the bill. "This bill shows huge progress in that work and will mean more opportunity for jobs, housing, and education for thousands of Illinoisans."

Under HB2373, most records can now be sealed and marks a big shift in allowing people to move beyond their past. The bill has a limited number of convictions that will remain ineligible for sealing, which include: records related to driving under the influence, domestic violence, harm to animals, and sexual assault. Before today, Illinois law allowed for only nine convictions to be sealed.

"As the leading organization that helps people seal their criminal record, we anticipate that this law will change the futures for thousands of individuals who felt there was no hope," said Beth Johnson, Legal Director of Cabrini Green Legal Aid.

Senator Don Harmon, who sponsored the bill in the Senate, said, "It is fundamentally unfair that someone who made a bad decision earlier in life should never be given a second chance. If these men and women have paid their debt and served their sentence, they should not be shackled with a document that forever deprives them of the ability to take care of themselves and their families."

The bill was one of a number of bills signed today that will improve the lives for people who interact with the criminal justice system. According to Governor Rauner, “Signing HB2373 is another important step forward in our ongoing effort to make Illinois’ criminal justice system more efficient and effective. This law will help people with criminal records obtain jobs, safe housing, and high-quality education, thereby reducing the likelihood of re-incarceration.”

“Finally, I can have an opportunity to provide for my family and show society I am rehabilitated,” said Karlos Lloyd, a leader with the FORCE Project (Fighting to Overcome Records and Create Equality) with Community Renewal Society who will be personally impacted by the bill. “Now I can be a role model and father figure to many young people who have doubted the system of rehabilitation.”

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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.

[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.

[Cabrini Green Legal Aid \(CGLA\)](#) – CGLA has been providing legal services to the community since 1973, and while our reach has expanded beyond the Cabrini Green neighborhood, our focus has narrowed to working for and alongside individuals, families and communities impacted by the direct and collateral consequences of the criminal justice system. Each year, over 6,000 people access CGLA’s services to remove or prevent barriers to employment and education caused by criminal records and to stabilize families and housing threatened by arrest or conviction. Through zealous legal services, social supports and systemic advocacy, CGLA seeks to strengthen individual lives, protect families, and mobilize communities impacted by arrest and incarceration.

[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 \(CRS\)](#) – CRS is a 135 year-old organization that works with people and communities to address racism and poverty. CRS transforms society towards greater justice and compassion.. CRS works to inform organize and train faith communities and individuals to advocate for social and economic justice. FORCE (Fighting to Overcome Records and Create Equality) is a program of of CRS led by people with records, their families, and faith allies organizing to create change and justice for people with records.