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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The GreenLight Fund invests \$600,000 to help spur \$2.1M public/private partnership to launch Center for Employment Opportunities, and reduce prison recidivism

Philadelphia, PA – After a yearlong collaboration with City and State government to identify evidence-based models supporting prison re-entry in Philadelphia, the GreenLight Fund recently announced the selection of its third portfolio organization, the [Center for Employment Opportunities \(CEO\)](#). The announcement was made at an event last Thursday night at the Center for Architecture with Mayor Nutter, Garrett Dutton (G. Love), the CEO leadership team, and GreenLight’s supporters from the entrepreneurial, venture capital, and philanthropic communities.

Since 2012, GreenLight, a philanthropic fund with roots in the venture capital community, has invested nearly \$2M to launch Philadelphia sites of evidence-based nonprofit organizations from around the country, including [Single Stop USA](#) and [Year Up](#). GreenLight’s \$600,000 award to CEO was part of a partnership between the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections, the Mayor’s Office, and the Department of Parks and Recreation to collectively commit \$2.1M to CEO’s proven model supporting men and women recently released from prison to successfully enter the workforce, and avoid returning to prison.

CEO is a nationally successful transitional work program providing immediate, effective and comprehensive employment services to men and women with recent criminal convictions. In 2014, CEO served more than 4,000 men and women recently released from prison, providing them with transitional jobs and support to find permanent employment. Their four-part model - life skills, transitional jobs, placement service, and retention support - has been proven to reduce recidivism rates by 22% for young, high-risk, formerly incarcerated men and women, according to 2012 MDRC random assignment study.

Each year, more than 5,000 men and women return to Philadelphia from prison. Research has shown that steady employment is one of the most important predictors of reentry success, but many of these individuals have extensive criminal records and limited work histories – barriers that prevent them from successfully reentering the workforce and finding stable jobs. These challenges contribute to a staggering number of Philadelphians who reoffend shortly after their release and return to prison. In 2014, the average recidivism rate within the first three years of release in Philadelphia was 66%. This number climbs to nearly 80% for young adults between the ages of 18 and 26.

Pennsylvania Secretary of Corrections, John Wetzel has been a strong national voice supporting preventative efforts to lower incarceration rates, and a leading supporter of CEO’s work in the state. “This evidenced

based, outcome focused approach has the potential to reduce crime and provide both the state and the community a significant return on its investment,” says Wetzel.

Mayor Michael Nutter, who has made crime and violence prevention a cornerstone of his Administration, said, “The CEO model has proven successful in cities and states across the country. We believe that it can and will be a tremendous addition to our efforts of supporting young returning citizens, men and women ages 18-24, as they work to re-engage in their communities and our local economy. Thanks to the Greenlight Fund for its investment and all of our partners for bringing CEO to Philadelphia.”

CEO expects to serve approximately 150 returning citizens in its first year of operations, and is working with the PA Department of Corrections to identify a pipeline of high-risk parolees, defined as returning citizens between the ages of 18 – 26 with a history of prior arrests or incarcerations. According the CEO’s Chief Executive, Sam Schaeffer, “The strong commitment from the GreenLight Fund and the clearly recognized demand from the City and State have positioned CEO for tremendous success and growth in Pennsylvania.” CEO’s Philadelphia Director, Ceciley Bradford-Jones, who leads a six-member local staff, added, “We are thrilled to have deep commitments from the public and philanthropic sectors and believe CEO will be critical piece of our citywide effort to ensure returning citizens have the opportunities and resources they need to successfully rejoin the mainstream economy.”

Similar to its collaborations with Single Stop and Year Up, the GreenLight Fund has partnered with the public sector and the business community to ensure significant and long-term funding for CEO’s evidence-based model. According to GreenLight Fund Philadelphia executive director, Matt Joyce, “CEO’s launch represents a deliberate and thoughtful collaboration between City and State leaders and philanthropy to address a massive community challenge with a proven and entrepreneurial solution.”

CEO began operations in Philadelphia this August – funded by the State Department of Corrections, the City Department of Parks and Recreation, and the GreenLight Fund.

Over the next four years, GreenLight will work closely with CEO to ensure the program’s long-term sustainability and growth. For more information on the GreenLight Fund, visit www.greenlightfund.org.

About the GreenLight Fund:

The GreenLight Fund transforms the lives of children, youth, and families in high-poverty urban areas by creating local infrastructure and a consistent annual process to: identify critical needs; import innovative, entrepreneurial programs that have a significant, measureable impact; and galvanize local support to help programs reach and sustain impact in the new city. Working in Boston since 2003, and Philadelphia and the San Francisco Bay Area since 2012, GreenLight aims to grow a national network of GreenLight initiatives that learn and work collaboratively to find and spread proven nonprofit solutions that achieve meaningful and measurable impact in our communities on the issues that matter most. Learn more at: www.greenlightfund.org

About the Center for Employment Opportunities:

The Center for Employment Opportunities (CEO) is dedicated to providing immediate, effective and comprehensive employment services to men and women with recent criminal convictions. CEO’s highly structured and tightly supervised programs help participants regain the skills and confidence needed for successful transitions to stable, productive lives. The model helps achieve these goals by providing life skill education, short-term paid transitional employment, full-time job placement and post-placement services. Since 1996, CEO has placed over 17,000 formerly incarcerated individuals in full-time employment – and continues to serve more than 4,200 participants every year. Learn more at: www.ceoworks.org