



NEWS from the Shelby County Mayor's Office

Lee Harris, Mayor

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MEDIA RELEASE

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**SHELBY COUNTY GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES LATEST SECOND CHANCE
INITIATIVE WITH A JOBS WEBSITE FOR EX-OFFENDERS AND JUSTICE-
IMPACTED INDIVIDUALS**

The Work to Break the Cycle website contains monthly updates of available Shelby County Government jobs for people with arrest or conviction histories to reduce recidivism and encourage ex-offenders to participate in the labor market.

- WHO:** Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris, Shelby County Office of ReEntry Director DeAndre Brown, Shelby County Human Resources Director Gerald Thornton, HopeWorks COO Patricia Melton, and justice-impacted employees
- WHAT:** The official launch of the Work to Break the Cycle website
- WHEN:** Friday, May 5, 2023, at 12:30 p.m.
- WHERE:** HopeWorks, 3337 Summer Ave., Memphis, TN, 38122

Shelby County, TN – On Friday, May 5, 2023, Mayor Lee Harris and members of the Shelby County ReEntry and Human Resources offices will celebrate the official launch of Shelby County Government's latest second chance initiative, the Work to Break the Cycle website. Work to Break the Cycle is a jobs website that provides regularly updated, available Shelby County Government jobs for people with arrest or conviction histories.

During his tenure, Mayor Lee Harris has worked on several initiatives to encourage justice-impacted individuals to seek employment with Shelby County Government. In 2020, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners passed the Ban the Box Ordinance which eliminates inquiring into arrest and criminal histories from Shelby County Government job applications. Since the



adoption of the Ban the Box Ordinance, dozens of ex-offenders have had an opportunity to start a career with Shelby County Government. Work to Break the Cycle builds on that initiative to give justice-impacted individuals a website with jobs curated for them.

Nearly everyone who is in prison now will return to their communities. By providing these second chance opportunities, individuals with conviction or arrest histories can receive meaningful employment that can reduce the chances they will reoffend. Recidivism rates drop by 20 percent when formerly incarcerated individuals are employed. A jobs site specifically for justice-impacted individuals can boost confidence during the job application phase, encourage justice-impacted individuals to participate in the local economy, and save taxpayer money by decreasing the amount of people incarcerated. That is why Shelby County Government wants to hire justice-impacted individuals.

Friday's celebration is also for those justice-impacted individuals who sought employment with Shelby County Government. They will be treated to a lunch from Fabulous Flavors and Friends, owned by Precious Thompson Jones, who has her own inspirational story of incarceration to employment.

You can find out more at worktobreakthecycle.com.

Shelby County Mayor Lee Harris: “Shelby County Government wants to hire justice-impacted individuals. Meaningful, stable, and sustainable employment can help ensure individuals do not reoffend and create new victims of crime. Our jobs on the Work to Break the Cycle website come with the promise of benefits like a living wage, paid parental leave, and healthcare coverage. I believe expanding these second chance opportunities benefits our whole community, reduces recidivism, and makes a real impact on public safety.”

Jerri Green, Senior Policy Advisor for Mayor Lee Harris: “A meaningfully employed society benefits everyone. Thousands of formerly incarcerated people return to our community every year. We know recidivism rates drop by 20 percent when a justice-impacted individual is employed. Inclusive hiring is a compassionate and common-sense practice that gives people and their families a second chance, creates a safer community, and stimulates our local economy.”

DeAndre Brown, Director of the Shelby County Office of ReEntry: “Nearly everyone who is incarcerated will return to their communities. It's important there are opportunities for justice-impacted individuals when they return home. Mayor Harris and his administration understand that



through programs, like Work to Break the Cycle, justice-impacted individuals can have confidence in applying for jobs they know they are qualified for and contribute to their community.”

Gerald Thornton, Shelby County Director of Human Resources: “The Harris Administration’s second chance initiatives have aided us in filling positions in a job market where applicants are scarce. Since the passage of the Ban the Box Ordinance, nearly 80 people with adverse backgrounds have been hired at Shelby County Government. Now, with the Work to Break the Cycle website, applicants are more confident they qualify for jobs and their criminal history will not impede them from County employment.”

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