

1 **Reentry Conference**
2 **Discussion Paper**

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4 **Background**

5 Currently, there are 628,917 positions that remain unfilled in Texas (source: Conference Board HWOL, June 2023),
6 but only 609,845 unemployed individuals in the Texas labor force (LAUS, June 2023). Helping Texas employers
7 acquire and retain talent is a focus for the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) and a key driver for the long-term
8 growth of the Texas economy.

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10 In Fiscal Year 2021, approximately 42,000 second-chance individuals were released from the Texas Department of
11 Criminal Justice prison and state jail facilities. Studies have shown that one of the most important factors in
12 preventing recidivism for second chance individuals is finding and retaining employment. Further, this population
13 represents an important talent pool for Texas employers with staffing needs that struggle to find quality
14 candidates. There are many benefits to employers for hiring second chance individuals including high job retention
15 rates and employee loyalty, as well as the associated cost savings. TWC is dedicated to supporting employers who
16 hire second chance individuals and offers an array of services including fidelity bonding and the Work Opportunity
17 Tax Credit (WOTC) to protect and incentivize the hiring practice. In 2022, TWC hosted an event for employers, the
18 GRACE (Growth through Reentry to Advance Careers & Employment) Conference, to share information with
19 employers about hiring second chance individuals.

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21 **Proposal**

22 Partner with an outside entity on a new or existing second chance event. This would allow TWC to leverage a
23 partnership to maximize attendance. However, it would mean less control over the content included in the overall
24 event and would require TWC to identify the partner; there are multiple organizations working in this arena, but
25 none have yet been approached about this partnership option.

- 26 ○ Estimated cost: \$30,000

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28 **Decision Point**

29 Staff recommends promoting second chance hiring to Texas employers and seeks direction regarding the use of
30 WIOA funds in support of future events featuring second chance hiring strategies.