

## Lenfest Foundation Announces Study on the Economic Impact of Pardons on Low-Income/High-Arrest Communities

**APRIL 8, 2019** – The Lenfest Foundation announced today that it will fund a study by the Economy League of Greater Philadelphia of the economic impact that pardons could have on low-income, high-arrest communities, as a part of workforce development initiatives.

“We have heard, from workforce development agencies across the state, as if with one voice, that criminal records are undeniably a major factor in keeping people and families in poverty,” said Dr. Keith Leaphart, Board Chair of the Lenfest Foundation, in announcing the award. “At a time when every state has to deal with the after-effects of mass incarceration, we need to understand the economic implications that criminal records have not just on families, but on the economy of the communities in which the returning citizens live. We thank Philadelphia Lawyers for Social Equity for bringing this key public policy issue to our attention.”

Earl Buford, Chief Executive Officer of Partner4Work, the workforce development agency for Pittsburgh and Allegheny County, wrote in support of PLSE’s proposal: “We know from working with individuals that their records are preventing them from getting jobs that are available and for which they are qualified. For some, these are professional jobs in accounting and health care; but even at the trades level, a criminal record stops them from enrolling in training programs or taking the examination that leads to a state license. We see these individuals facing career barriers each day, losing income and hope.”

“In so many cases, our efforts to place individuals into high pay jobs for which many of them are qualified, are thwarted by the existence of a criminal record,” added H. Patrick Clancy, President and CEO of Philadelphia Works, Inc., which serves as Philadelphia’s Workforce Development Board. “In our City, a high paying job equates to the first step out of poverty.”

“There is simply no doubt that fiscal responsibility is an urgent justice issue,” said Philadelphia District Attorney Larry Krasner. “With respect to pardons, erasing the mark of incarceration may have a tangible economic impact. This type of research might inform potential solutions from government at the state and local level, including making re-entry easier for justice-involved individuals and communities. We look forward to working with the Economy League in this study.”

The study is expected to be concluded by September.

**ABOUT PLSE:** PLSE provides free legal representation to low income residents of Philadelphia whose criminal records are holding them back from achieving their potential as productive, contributing citizens. The services include seeking expungements in criminal court and pardons from the Governor, educating elected and community leaders, and empowering under-resourced communities to seek a greater voice and needed legislative reforms. PLSE was twice recognized in 2017 as an exemplary non-profit, with both a 2018-19 Barra Award, and the Pennsylvania Bar Foundation’s Goffman Award.