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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CHAN ZUCKERBERG INITIATIVE BACKS REDF TO INVEST IN JOBS, SUPPORT AND TRAINING
FOR PEOPLE WITH HISTORIES OF INCARCERATION**

Significant grant will help people develop a job history and skills for lasting employment

SAN FRANCISCO (NOVEMBER 8, 2018) – REDF (The Roberts Enterprise Development Fund), a pioneering leader of the social enterprise movement, announced on Friday its first grant from the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI): a significant effort to help people who have been incarcerated attain lasting, meaningful employment.

Through this initiative, CZI will help REDF to build, grow and strengthen social enterprises around the country—the revenue-generating businesses that provide training and jobs to people overcoming significant barriers to employment, including histories of incarceration. The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative’s work in [Justice & Opportunity](#) focuses on reducing barriers to opportunity. Because a criminal record is a powerful and intractable barrier to opportunity in America today, creating fair chance employment for people impacted by the criminal justice system is a top priority at CZI.

“For more than 20 years REDF has been investing in and advising social enterprises around the country that empower people overcoming high barriers to employment – including those returning from incarceration—with the paying jobs, training, and support they need to succeed,” said Carla Javits, REDF President & CEO. “CZI’s generous support signals to others seeking a strong social return on investment the value of this evidence-based model, and the role it plays in building a more just and inclusive economy.”

Making a compelling case for investment, REDF has assembled [significant evidence of results](#), and profiled exemplars like [Pablo Gaxiola](#), who spent 15 years in and out prison and today, manages Goodwill Silicon Valley’s [New Opportunity Work Program](#), the very same program that helped him turn his life around. Pablo also sits on two county commissions, providing an important perspective on how to improve our criminal justice system. Instead of building jails with doors that slam shut, he wants to make sure they also swing open. And when they do, they swing open to opportunity.

The new one-year grant from CZI will help REDF toward its goal of helping 50,000 people overcome barriers to employment by 2020 through jobs and training—70% of whom will be returning to their communities after incarceration.

“CZI is committed to safely reducing the number of people we incarcerate in the United States,” said Ana Zamora, Criminal Justice Manager at the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative. “A critical piece of achieving this goal is ensuring that the thousands of people being released from prison each year after serving their time can find good, stable jobs. REDF’s model leads to the direct employment of formerly incarcerated people and is helping industries across the U.S. see the value of investing in this population.”

A job at a social enterprise provides much more than a paycheck—including stability, a sense of pride and purpose, and a true path to self-sufficiency.

Today, between 70 and 100 million Americans have a criminal record of some kind. These individuals are systematically disadvantaged in seeking things like employment, housing, public benefits, financial aid, or a license to practice one’s trade or profession. Unfortunately, these barriers persist long after people have paid their debt to society. There is also ample evidence that these barriers especially burden our poorest communities and communities of color.

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About REDF

REDF (the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund) is a pioneering venture philanthropy galvanizing a national movement of social enterprises—purpose-driven, revenue-generating businesses that help people striving to overcome employment barriers get jobs, keep jobs, and build a better life. For people with histories of incarceration, homelessness, mental illness, addiction, and young people who are not in school or working, social enterprises provide the paying jobs and services they need to stabilize their lives, develop a work history, and build skills and confidence. Since 1997, REDF has invested in 147 social enterprises in 23 states. To date, those businesses have earned over \$603 million in revenue and employed over 31,000 people (and counting). For more information, follow REDF @REDFworks or visit www.redf.org.

About CZI’s Criminal Justice Reform Program:

The Chan Zuckerberg Initiative’s criminal justice program focuses on redesigning our justice system with community health and safety at its core, and with those directly impacted – presently and formerly incarcerated persons, crime survivors, law enforcement, families, and communities—at the helm of its transformation. We support organizations across the country and across traditional political divides doing bold work in criminal justice. Our criminal justice work currently focuses on three main areas: transforming prosecution; building opportunity for people impacted by the justice system; and growing the justice reform movement, and is part of our Justice & Opportunity Initiative.