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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Governor Newsom Signs Legislation that Affirms the Value of
Employment Social Enterprises in California’s Workforce System**

SB 779, authored by Senator Josh Becker and co-sponsored by REDF (Roberts Enterprise Development Fund) and Jewish Vocational Services (JVS), becomes California law

SAN FRANCISCO, CA (September 24, 2021) - Building on strong support from the California State Legislature, Governor Newsom signed SB 779 into law, naming employment social enterprises (ESEs) and worker cooperatives among the recognized “earn and learn” programs under the Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act. This trailblazing legislation opens State funding opportunities to these innovative businesses, whose unique combination of paid, on-the-job training and supportive services equip thousands of Californians striving to overcome employment barriers with the stability and skills they need to thrive in the workforce.

For nearly 25 years, REDF has partnered with employment social enterprises nationwide by providing capital and capacity-building support to propel this proven model and create a more inclusive economy. To create change at a systems-level, REDF informs and influences policymakers to invest in ESEs – and mobilizes ESE leaders as advocates on policy issues.

Led by Senator Josh Becker, and in partnership with Jewish Vocational Services, SB 779 includes ESEs and worker cooperatives as examples of “earn and learn” programs. Such programs combine applied learning in a workplace setting with compensation, allowing participants to gain work experience and secure a wage as they develop skills and competencies directly relevant to the occupation or career for which they are preparing – a direct alignment with innovative work models, like ESEs and worker cooperatives. Furthermore, the bill defines employment social enterprises in labor code, so when any workforce development funding comes from the State and/or the Federal governments, ESEs will be included.

“Overlooked talent across our state deserve the opportunity to share their skills and abilities, and contribute to their communities,” shares REDF CEO Carla Javits. “With SB 779, California is providing the nation with a blueprint for how to welcome and fully incorporate the enormous human potential of young people and adults who have experienced homelessness or incarceration and are too often shut out of the workforce, while strengthening the economy and closing gaps in the labor market.”

Government is increasingly recognizing the ESE approach as an effective model that helps strengthen communities. With this legislative victory, California leads the nation in using holistic approaches for a more equitable workforce as we recover from the pandemic, with Federal and other State governments using the language in the bill as a model for similar initiatives.

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ABOUT REDF

REDF (the Roberts Enterprise Development Fund) is a pioneering venture philanthropy accelerating a national movement of employment social enterprises – mission-driven, revenue-generating businesses that invest the money they make into helping people striving to overcome employment barriers get jobs, keep jobs, and build a better life. Independent research shows this approach works. It leads to greater economic security and mobility and a significant rate of return to society—\$2.23 in benefits for every \$1 invested.

For more information, visit www.redf.org.