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**Department of Justice**

U.S. Attorney's Office

Northern District of Alabama

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## **City of Birmingham Bans the Box on Employment Applications**

*U.S. Attorney and Department of Labor Applaud Birmingham as First in Alabama to Make the Change*

**BIRMINGHAM** – The City of Birmingham is now the first city in Alabama to “Ban the Box” on its hiring applications, a move that should help ex-offenders find jobs and decrease the likelihood that they will return to prison.

Birmingham Mayor William A. Bell, U.S. Attorney Joyce White Vance, U.S. Deputy Secretary of Labor Chris Lu, and The Dannon Project Executive Director Kerri Pruitt announced the change Thursday in a press conference at the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In Alabama, more than 30,000 people are in prison or jail. The vast majority of those inmates – about 95 percent – will eventually return to the community. In Jefferson County alone, about 2,000 people return from prison annually.

“The city will continue to lead the way by expanding existing programs and furthering our reach,” Mayor Bell said. “There is no such thing as a disposable person. We must take the time and make the effort to offer second chances to the thousands of people impacted by these statistics.”

“There is strong data showing that finding a job substantially reduces an ex-offender's likelihood of returning to prison,” U.S. Attorney Vance said. “For those who believe former inmates are unsafe or unfit for the workplace, there is also ample data showing that employed ex-offenders have better retention rates, better performance metrics, and pose no greater risk within the workplace than those without a conviction history.”

“Birmingham is taking an important step to give people with a criminal history a fair shot to compete for jobs and a chance to be judged on their qualifications,” said Deputy Secretary Lu. “I applaud the leadership of Mayor Bell and U.S. Attorney Vance, and I look forward to working with them to support the full re-entry of ex-offenders.”

“We are very thankful for the opportunity to educate returning citizens, as well as the extended community, about the valuable support that Ban the Box offers in giving everyone equal access to employment,” said Dannon Director Pruitt.

Many employers require job applicants to disclose conviction and arrest history on the initial job application. Often, when that disclosure is made, the applicant is immediately removed from further consideration for employment. The national “Ban the Box” campaign encourages governments and private employers to delay consideration of offense history within the hiring process.

Data shows that ex-offenders who are able to find a job are about half as likely to reoffend as those who are unable to find employment. Removing barriers to a successful return to society for individuals coming out of prison helps them become productive members of society and reduces the likelihood they will commit new crimes.

More than 100 cities and counties and 19 states, including Georgia, have joined companies like Walmart, Target, Home Depot and Koch Industries to ban the box. Late last year, President Obama called upon the Office of Personnel Management to ban the box within federal employment applications.

In Alabama, Jefferson County sends more people to state prison than any other county, which underscores the important role the City of Birmingham has taken in removing the conviction box from its initial employment applications.

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