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WILMINGTON ALLIANCE ANNOUNCES PARTNERSHIP WITH FRIENDSHIP HOUSE TO PROVIDE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TO COVER COSTS RELATED TO FINES AND FEES

\$71K donation from Wilmington Alliance to the Friendship House Fines & Fees Fund to provide financial assistance to justice-involved individuals to cover costs related to fines and fees.

WILMINGTON, Del. (February 7, 2023) – Wilmington Alliance is announcing a two-year partnership with Friendship House. The Alliance donated \$71,000 to the Friendship House Fines and Fees Fund. Through the fund, financial assistance is provided for lifting capias, covering new state IDs, new State Driver Licenses and/or Delaware Birth Certificates or other costs that impede individuals' movement through the expungement or pardon process. This funding does not support parking and/or speeding tickets, back child support or other circumstances unrelated to the expungement and pardon processes.

Since 2021, Wilmington Alliance has served as the facilitating agency for a citywide workforce development collaborative, helping to connect neighborhoods, businesses, nonprofits and other stakeholders in creating pathways and removing barriers to employment for nontraditional and/or justice-involved job seekers. Friendship House, a member of the collaborative, launched the Fines and Fees Fund in partnership with the Campaign to End Debtor's Prison to mitigate the barriers that are created when individuals are unable to pay off or pay down court and other related fines and fees.

"We cannot realistically say that we are working to help people have a second chance in life when they cannot advance through the expungement process because they are not able to pay court fees", said Renata B. Kowalczyk, CEO of Wilmington Alliance. "To the extent that we can, we should be supporting our partner organizations like the Friendship House that are deliberately breaking down barriers to self-sufficiency and success."

"It is very difficult to navigate the system without proper resources. The system is designed to hold people accountable for their actions; however, the level of accountability required can be an impossible bar to reach for so many in our state. This results in impossible barriers to overcome. Our goal is to help break down systematic barriers in front of people so they can keep moving towards achieving their own goals," said Kim Eppehimer, Friendship House Executive Director & CEO. "At Friendship House, we truly believe everyone deserves a place to call home – but you can't do that without proper income or a loving, supportive community. This is a step towards equalizing the playing field for many people. We are thrilled for this partnership."

In addition to this two-year partnership and contributing to the Fines and Fees Fund, Wilmington Alliance continues its financial support to other partner organizations including NERDiT CARES, Code Differently and YWCA in the forms of stipends for the training participants and free access to Apricot360 and the North Star Digital Literacy platforms.

About the Fund: In partnership with the Delaware Campaign to End Debtor's Prison (CEDP), Friendship House (FH) created a Fines and Fees Fund to help Delawareans. This designated funding is available to residents of Delaware whose court-issued fines and fees have become a barrier to moving in the direction they would like to go. FH and the Delaware CEDP want to break the cycle of homelessness caused by a court-issued fine to a person living in poverty. The many fees added to a court-issued fine often make the total owed quite large. This creates barriers to obtaining a job or affording rent and can even result in a capias out for their arrest. The FH Fines and Fees Fund assists by paying the fee in full or making other payment arrangements. This fund is available throughout the state of Delaware. Visit www.friendshiphouse.org for more information.

About Friendship House: Friendship House is a 501c3 nonprofit whose mission is to unite people facing homelessness with loving supportive communities they can call home throughout Delaware. Its programs include several Empowerment Centers, Transitional Housing, the Clothing Bank, significant winter assistance and Financial Assistance. The FH Financial Assistance program provides financial support to Delawareans who are unable to pay bills that could result in houselessness or are preventing them from seeking housing. In 2021, FH provided over 3,000 households with financial assistance. For more than 35 years, Friendship House has served the Delaware community with the support of volunteers, donors, and community and faith partners.

About Wilmington Alliance: The Wilmington Alliance brings people together to drive innovative solutions, leverage resources and promote opportunities to empower the city's residents and businesses. The Wilmington Alliance partners with community, civic, and business leaders to prioritize the City's highest needs to drive economic opportunity and social vitality. Our work is done through an equity lens. All our initiatives involve equitable wealth creation in the traditionally marginalized Wilmington communities of Black and Brown residents. The Alliance, works to make Wilmington a more beautiful, safer, and thriving city that provides opportunity for all through our programs in Workforce Development; Entrepreneurship and Small Business Support; and Creative Placemaking.