

Reentry Think Tank
2544 Germantown Ave
Philadelphia, PA 19143

10 February, 2017

Dear Small Business Association,

On behalf of the Philadelphia Reentry Think Tank,
please accept this letter in support of Mt Airy USA and Finata for the Aspire Challenge.

Mt Airy USA and Finata have been working with underserved and marginalized communities for decades, and in Philadelphia, where more than 1 in 4 have a criminal record, and the recidivism rate of Returning Citizens exceeds 65%, the need for expansive programming to the reentry population is paramount.

The Philadelphia Reentry Think Tank, a program of the Philadelphia Reentry Coalition, works with individuals with direct experience in the criminal justice system to both connect with people in positions of power, and identify platforms that will help them succeed when they return to their communities. Throughout our work, we've interviewed over a thousand Philadelphians with criminal records, and one of the most consistently identified hurdles to staying free is employment. The collateral consequences of criminal records impact people's ability to obtain safe and affordable housing, equitable employment, educational opportunities, and many essential human rights. Perhaps more than this, how these records shackle people to their past so often destroys people's hope, their ability to dream, and see a way to support themselves and realize their dreams.

Time and time again, we've had the privilege to see what happens when those in reentry have a platform to impact their lives, and those in their communities: they succeed, they transcend beyond the statistics and stereotypes, and reveal all their power and potential. There are few people who exemplify this more than Aaron Crump. Aaron's complex and human understanding of issues and his unending passion for connecting those in reentry to the needed resources to thrive, make him an incredible candidate to help manage this expansion of Mt Airy and Finata's work.

The need for an entrepreneurship program like this for returning citizens is great. With the amplification of Mt Airy's successful entrepreneurship model, the inclusion of those with lived experience, they are particularly well suited to address this challenge. We wholeheartedly support them

Please feel free to contact us with any questions or require additional information.

Best,



Courtney Bowles and Mark Strandquist
Co-directors of the Philadelphia Reentry Think Tank

