

VOLUNTEER LAWYERS PROJECT

OF ONONDAGA COUNTY, INC.

February 9, 2017

Dominic Robinson, Vice President, Economic Inclusion
CenterState CEO
115 W. Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

Dear Dominic:

I am pleased to support CenterState CEO's submission to the SBA's Aspire Challenge for its Up Start Aspire Challenge project serving the business development needs of individuals with criminal records in the city of Syracuse.

The Volunteer Lawyers Project of Onondaga County engages the legal community in providing access to justice to those in need. As a committed partner in this project, VLP will provide:

- Referrals for formerly incarcerated individuals interested in starting businesses; and,
- Individualized support to graduates of the UP Start Aspire Challenge project's *Start It!* course, identifying legal issues that may prevent them from launching and growing successful businesses.

Having worked with CenterState CEO through the Work Train program, we are confident that applying legal issue remediation to your successful UP Start microenterprise development program will greatly enhance the ability of formerly incarcerated individuals to launch and grow successful businesses. Through our New Start Reentry Program, we have been committed to ensuring that jobseekers can remove barriers to employment that are caused by criminal records. We are excited to expand this work in collaboration with the UP Start Aspire Challenge Project to include supports for entrepreneurs with criminal records. This work is critical to helping provide opportunities and hope to low-income community members in Syracuse.

Please contact me at scurran@onvlp.org or (315) 579-2576 if you, or any SBA representatives require any further information.

Yours truly,



Sally Curran
Executive Director

Providing Equal Access to Justice to Those in Need

221 S. Warren St., Suite 320, Syracuse, NY 13202

(315) 471-3409 www.onvlp.org

Cooperative Federal

Syracuse's community development credit union



February 8, 2017

Dominic Robinson, Vice President for Economic Inclusion
CenterState CEO
115 W. Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

Dear Dominic,

Given the long relationship between Syracuse Cooperative Federal Credit Union and CenterState CEO's Economic Inclusion team, we enthusiastically support an expanded partnership for the proposed Up Start Aspire Challenge project, serving returning citizens and formerly incarcerated individuals in the city of Syracuse who wish to start new businesses.

Cooperative Federal's unique position as both a traditional credit union and a non-profit community development organization provides our credit union with the perspective and passion to improve the lives of the most vulnerable among us. By fostering economic equity and solidarity, we work to revitalize our community. Having worked closely with you and your staff toward this end, we are committed to providing Up Start Aspire Challenge entrepreneurs with:

- Access to the dedicated Up Start Micro Loan Fund that we have co-developed;
- Individual Financial and Credit Assessments to develop personalized plans for building creditworthiness and bankability; and,
- Access to our Credit Builder Club to assist with establishing and remediating credit.

For 35 years Cooperative Federal has been a lifeline in the urban core of Syracuse, forging real opportunities and successfully overcoming obstacles that often seem insurmountable. We seek to improve the lives of our members while rebuilding our local economy. Since our founding we have deployed over \$133 million in loans, transforming neighborhoods and building assets in communities that have been abandoned by mainstream banks. More than a financial institution, Cooperative Federal is part of the community-based movement to empower our neighborhoods and overcome the effects of decay, neglect, and discrimination.

We look forward to the opportunity to partner with you on this project and wish you luck with your application to the SBA Aspire Challenge. Please feel free to contact me at (315)473-0201 if I can be of any further assistance.

For cooperation,

Ron Ehrenreich
Treasurer/CEO



Syracuse Cooperative Federal Credit Union • Working for economic justice since 1982



Eastside Office
& Mailing Address
723 Westcott Street
Syracuse, NY 13210

Southwest Office
SW Community Center
401 South Avenue Suite 100
Syracuse, NY 13205

Northside Office
Assisi Center
800 North Salina St.
Syracuse, NY 13208

Tel: (315) 473-0201
Fax: (315) 476-0567
ronehrenreich@coopfed.org
www.cooperativefederal.org



CENTER FOR COMMUNITY ALTERNATIVES

INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS FOR JUSTICE

February 7, 2017

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Dominic Robinson
Vice President, Economic Inclusion
CenterState CEO
115 W. Fayette Street
Syracuse, NY 13202

Dear Dominic:

With this letter, I would like to extend my support to CenterState CEO as a contestant in the SBA's Aspire Challenge, for your proposal serving the business development needs of formerly incarcerated individuals in Syracuse through the Up Start Aspire Challenge project.

The new partnership our two organizations would form through this project aligns with the Center for Community Alternatives' mission to promote reintegrative justice and a reduced reliance on incarceration through advocacy, services and public policy development in pursuit of civil and human rights.

CCA's employment programs serve individuals with criminal justice backgrounds and incarceration histories including many who live in public housing. Our programs provide an array of services including: pre-release cognitive behavioral training for some individuals at the Onondaga County Correctional Facility; job readiness training; case management; recovery support; and legal services designed to ameliorate the collateral consequences of having a criminal history as it relates to workforce attachment and higher education. Given the various supports they receive through CCA our participants will be fitting candidates for your UP Start Aspire Challenge project. The life skills and assistance they receive through CCA can then be applied within the UP Start program as they seek to create new life paths through entrepreneurship. We are, therefore, happy to commit to providing referrals to your program for our clientele who would benefit from participation.

If CCA can assist any further in your application process, please feel free to contact Mike Pasquale, Director, Reintegration service at the phone number below. We look forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,

David Condliffe, Esq.
Executive Director