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Blueprint Highlighting Employment Reforms for People with Disabilities Released

Equip for Equality and Jones Day Hosted Forum on Illinois Employment First Act Blueprint

Chicago, IL (October 30, 2014) – Today, Equip for Equality released a Blueprint for the implementation of the Illinois Employment First Act. A Forum discussing the Blueprint and its recommendations to maximize employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Illinois was co-hosted by Equip for Equality and Jones Day at Jones Day's Chicago office today.

The Illinois Employment First Act was signed by Governor Pat Quinn on July 16, 2013 and declares the policy of Illinois to be that competitive and integrated employment shall be considered as the first option when serving persons with disabilities of working age in Illinois. The legislation requires state agencies to work together to prioritize competitive, integrated employment for people with disabilities and establish measurable goals and objectives for the state, in keeping with a nationwide movement of people with disabilities and advocates promoting similar policies.

The Blueprint contains best practices from other states and recommends concrete action steps for Illinois to take to help ensure the successful implementation of the new law. Equip for Equality, a non-profit organization that works to advance the civil and human rights of people with disabilities, prepared the Blueprint with Searle Funds at The Chicago Community Trust and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services: the Administration on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities and pro bono assistance provided by attorneys from Jones Day.

Blueprint Released / add one

“The Blueprint provides policymakers and stakeholders in Illinois with specific recommendations and action steps to ensure that the promise of Employment First becomes a reality in Illinois,” said Barry Taylor, VP for Civil Rights and Systemic Litigation at Equip for Equality, and the Project Manager for the Blueprint. “We hope Illinois will move expeditiously to implement the recommendations set forth in the Blueprint.” Equip for Equality attorneys Melissa Picciola and Cheryl Jansen were the lead drafters of the Blueprint.

Representatives from Equip for Equality and Jones Day presented the Blueprint's recommendations at today's Employment First Forum. A panel of key state officials then shared their reactions to the recommendations. The Forum concluded with the presenters of the Blueprint and the panel of state officials addressing questions from the audience.

"Jones Day has been pleased to assist Equip for Equality in such an important effort to increase employment opportunities for people with disabilities in Illinois," said Mark Rotatori, a partner with Jones Day who oversaw Jones Day's contributions to the development of the Blueprint. "We were pleased to host the Forum where we could share the recommendations set forth in the Blueprint and have a productive discussion as to how Illinois can achieve the goals of the Employment First Act."

An electronic version of the Blueprint can be downloaded at:

www.equipforequality.org/employmentfirst

About Equip for Equality

Equip for Equality is a private, not-for-profit entity designated in 1985 by the Governor to administer the federally mandated protection and advocacy system for safeguarding the rights of people with physical and mental disabilities in Illinois. For more information, visit www.equipforequality.org.

About Jones Day

Jones Day is a global law firm with 41 offices in major centers of business and finance throughout the world. Its unique governance system fosters an unparalleled level of integration and contributes to its perennial ranking as among the best in the world in client service. Jones Day provides significant legal representation for almost half of the *Fortune* 500, *Fortune* Global 500, and *FT* Global 500.