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**APPLICATIONS NOW OPEN: HIRE360 AND ILLINOIS AFL-CIO LAUNCH STATEWIDE
“CLIMATE WORKS PRE-APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM” TO TRAIN 500 UNDERSERVED
ILLINOIS RESIDENTS FOR CLEAN ENERGY CAREERS**

*The New Partnership Leverages \$8.8 Million in Grant Funding to Build a Diverse Workforce in
Illinois’ Clean Energy Sector*

CHICAGO—HIRE360, a leading nonprofit focused on expanding economic opportunities for underserved communities, today announced a groundbreaking statewide partnership with the Illinois AFL-CIO to launch the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program. Supported by the Climate and Equitable Jobs Act (CEJA) and the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO), this initiative is designed to create a pathway for nearly 500 Illinois residents from underrepresented communities to enter union careers in the burgeoning clean energy sector.

The partnership between HIRE360 and the IL AFL-CIO, along with Climate Jobs Illinois, local workforce organizations, educational organizations, community groups, and building trades, is backed by \$8.8 million in grant funding. The program aims to recruit, prescreen, and provide pre-apprenticeship skills training to prepare participants for registered union apprenticeship programs in clean energy construction and building trades.

“Our collaboration with the IL AFL-CIO and our other valued partners marks a pivotal moment in building a cleaner and more equitable future for Illinois,” **said Jay Rowell, Executive Director of HIRE360.** “By focusing on underserved communities, this program is not just about training workers—it’s about creating opportunities, fostering diversity, and ensuring that all Illinoisans can thrive in the clean energy economy.”

The program will focus on recruiting candidates from Central and Southern Illinois, offering a comprehensive suite of resources and support. Participants will receive hands-on training, industry-recognized certifications, and invaluable networking opportunities. Additionally, personalized case management, test preparation, career exploration, and access to financial assistance through the Energy Transition Barrier Reduction Program will be provided to eliminate barriers to participation.

“The Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program is a critical step in accelerating clean energy efforts in our communities while equipping a new generation of workers with the skills needed for success,” **said Pat Devaney, Secretary Treasurer, IL AFL-CIO.** “By empowering a diverse workforce to enter the clean energy sector, we are laying the foundation for resilient and prosperous Illinois.”

Partner organizations in the Central region include Goodwill Industries of Northern Illinois and Wisconsin Stateline Area, Mid-America Carpenters Regional Council Apprentice and Training, Tri-County Urban League, Awaken Foundation, Illinois Central College, and Bloomington Normal Building Trades JATC. In the Southern region, key partners include Career Pathways, Lewis and Clark College, Southwestern Illinois College, Workforce Investment Solutions, and the International Union of Painters and Allied Trades (IUPAT) District Council 58. Through these collaborations, the program aims to address historical inequities and ensure that every community can benefit from the state’s investment in clean energy.

“When I signed CEJA into law, it was with an understanding that a clean energy future is meaningless if it leaves behind those most in need. HIRE360 speaks directly to that ethos, and I’m proud to have them as a partner in the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program,” **said Governor JB Pritzker.** “This grant funding will support both new graduates and those changing career paths in pursuing new avenues in the industries of the future—an economic investment in Central and Southern Illinois that will have a tangible impact for generations to come.”

The first recruitment cycle has begun and will continue until May 31, 2025. Over the next several months, training will start in different regions. To be eligible, applicants must be Illinois residents, 17.5 years or older, eligible to work in the U.S. and meet certain educational and equity criteria. For more information about the Climate Works Pre-Apprenticeship Program and other CEJA initiatives, please visit www.hire360chicago.com/climateworks/.

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About HIRE360

Launched in January 2020, HIRE360 is an industry-led, community-focused nonprofit ensuring that our city’s future is inspired by all the communities that call Chicago home. Our “demand” driven approach to workforce development allows a direct connection with employers and unions to develop workforce recruitment and training programs that meet the specific and timely employment needs of the hospitality and construction sectors. As a workforce intermediary, we identify, recruit, skill up and help community members navigate the apprenticeship process. Our business development program creates wealth and career opportunities in Chicago’s communities by investing capital, time and mentorship to help Minority- and Women-Owned Business Enterprises start, grow and thrive. Learn more at www.HIRE360Chicago.com.