TARGET CORPORATION DISTRIBUTES UP TO $600,000 TO REENTRY ORGANIZATIONS ACROSS THE COUNTRY TO SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH CRIMINAL HISTORIES

Funding is part of a settlement of a 2018 class action job discrimination lawsuit

FORTUNE SOCIETY – A PLAINTIFF IN THE LAWSUIT – RECEIVES $100,000

(NEW YORK – FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE) Target Corporation (Target) has agreed to make a one-time payment of up to $600,000 directly to seven nonprofit organizations nationwide that provide re-entry services to people with criminal justice involvement. Called the Pipeline Project, the payment is part of a previously announced settlement of a 2018 class action job discrimination lawsuit in which The Fortune Society (Fortune) played a pivotal role as a plaintiff.

Fortune, one of the nation’s most respected reentry and advocacy organizations, received $100,000 that will assist the nonprofit as it continues to develop a pipeline of qualified applicants through its robust job training and reentry services for people with criminal histories.

In addition to Fortune, other organizations to receive Pipeline Project funding include: A New Way of Life (CA); Anti-Recidivism Coalition (CA); RS Eden (MN); AccessAbility (MN); Community Partners in Action (CT); and Center for Employment Opportunities (a New York-based group with services in 11 states and 30 different cities.

In March 2018, The NAACP Legal Defense and Education Fund, Inc. (LDF) and the law firm of Outten & Golden LLP filed a complaint in the United States District Court for the Southern District of New York alleging that Target’s overly broad and outdated criminal background check policy disproportionately discriminated against African-American and Latino applicants and thereby violated Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

As a plaintiff, Fortune charged that Target’s hiring practices affected many of its clients who applied and were denied employment or who were deterred from applying because of the company’s previous policy.

JoAnne Page, President and CEO of The Fortune Society said, “Under the best of circumstances, the people we serve at The Fortune Society face daunting challenges in overcoming job discrimination because of their involvement with the justice system. Today, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, and with unemployment at levels not seen since the Great Depression of the 1930s, our clients’ struggles grow even more dire. At a time when government funding and budgets are being slashed and cut to the bone, this funding
from Target will support Fortune as we provide critical job training that will allow our clients to become valued, skilled and reliable members of the workforce.”

As part of the settlement, Target worked with two nationally renowned experts on revisions to its background check policy which have now been implemented. Target will continue to work with these experts to review its newly-implemented background check policy and will continue to make improvements so that fewer applicants with criminal records will face disqualification.

Attorney Ossai Miazad from Outten & Golden, added, “We look forward to continuing our relationship with Target as it works to become a true example for other companies in the area of fair and nondiscriminatory screening and hiring practices.”

The use of criminal background checks by employers has a tremendous impact on African Americans and Latinos across the country. It is estimated that roughly 85 million Americans now have some kind of criminal record. Due to the bias and prejudice in the criminal justice system, African Americans and Latinos are disproportionately likely to have an arrest or conviction record. Further, criminal background checks have become a routine aspect of most employers’ hiring processes. A 2017 report by the Urban Institute noted than more than 80% of employers conduct these checks.

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Founded in 1967, The Fortune Society has advocated on criminal justice issues for more than five decades and is nationally recognized for developing model programs that help people with criminal justice histories to be assets to their communities. Fortune offers a holistic and integrated model of comprehensive service provision. Among the services offered are discharge planning, licensed outpatient substance use and mental health treatment, benefits enrollment and access, alternatives to incarceration, HIV/AIDS case management, health services, career development and job retention, education, family services, and supportive housing as well as lifetime access to aftercare. For more information, visit www.fortunesociety.org.