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Ericka White Named State Director of the Illinois Small Business Development Center Network

Former Assistant State Director makes history as the first woman, first African American, and first Hispanic individual chosen to lead the Network in its nearly 40-year history

CHICAGO – The Illinois Small Business Development Center (SBDC) Network today announced Ericka White has been named as its new State Director. White has over two decades of experience assisting Illinois' small businesses through Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) programs. She previously served as the Illinois SBDC Network Assistant State Director and is a graduate of University of Illinois Springfield where she earned her Bachelor of Business Administration, Master of Business Administration and Master of Legal Studies degrees.

"Small businesses are the backbone of the Illinois economy and supporting our state's entrepreneurs is more important now than ever," **said Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton**. "Last year alone, the Network provided support for the most women-owned businesses and most minority-owned businesses since its inception in 1984. I am thrilled that Ericka has been chosen to lead the Illinois SBDC Network and will continue to expand access to resources for entrepreneurs across the state."

The Illinois SBDC Network, one of the largest in the nation, is hosted by DCEO and administered through DCEO's Office of Entrepreneurship, Innovation & Technology. It is currently comprised of 38 centers located throughout the state which provide information, confidential business guidance, training, and other resources for start-ups and existing small businesses. Services include one-on-one business advising including assistance with the development of business plans, development of marketing plans, financial analysis and planning, access to market information and business financing programs, and business education and training opportunities which are provided to clients thanks to funding from U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA), DCEO, and local supporters across the state.

"Our Small Business Development Centers help entrepreneurs across Illinois turn their vision and business dreams into a reality by providing the technical assistance and support business owners need most. In her role as Assistant State Director, Ericka White has been instrumental in the success of the Illinois SBDC Network and we're delighted to have her step into the State Director role," **said DCEO Director Sylvia I. Garcia**. "Ericka's extensive experience, unwavering dedication, results-oriented leadership and collaborative energy will prove invaluable for Illinois' small business community."

U.S. SBA Great Lakes Regional Administrator Geri Aglipay said, "As the White House-appointed Regional Administrator for SBA Region V that includes the State of Illinois, I applaud the announcement of Ericka White as the new Director of the Illinois SBDC Network. Ms. White is a talented senior leader who is dedicated to supporting equitable access for small businesses to attain the resources they need to start a business, buy a business, scale, recover or transition their venture in Illinois. The SBDC

Network is a key resource partner of the US Small Business Administration. As the only cabinet-level federal agency specifically created to help small businesses start, grow and endure, the SBA is committed to supporting small business owners where they are at from the bottom up to the middle out. Under Ms. White's leadership, I look forward to the how the SBA and the SBDC will advance the inclusive economic recovery for Illinois and support a stronger economy in the Great Lakes Region."

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Illinois SBDCs have assisted over 20,000 entrepreneurs with navigating unprecedented challenges associated with these unprecedented times, including helping businesses to secure over \$253M in funding, saving 71,560 jobs and creating 7,213 new jobs.

U.S. SBA Illinois District Director Bo Steiner said, "U.S. Small Business Administration is proud to jointly fund the Illinois SBDCs and understands how crucial it is to provide the support necessary for entrepreneurs to start and grow their businesses. We are excited to work with Ericka and the vast network to ensure Illinois' small businesses can thrive."

"Ericka is without a doubt the right person to take the Illinois SBDC Network to the next level," **said Illinois SBDC Advisory Board Member and Founder of the Black Business Alliance Denise Moore.** "I have had the pleasure of working with her for quite some time now and am consistently impressed with her creative, innovative and inclusive approaches to providing top-notch service for our state's small businesses."

For more information on where to find a statewide list of SBDC locations, visit:

<https://viewer.blipstar.com/blipstar?uid=5161672>