FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: August 20, 2025

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Bridging the Gap in the Federal Safety Net: Business-led Employee Retention and Advancement Solution Demonstrates Social Impact

Grand Rapids, Michigan – Historically, federal support helped buffer the blow of employee economic hardship, but that safety net is shrinking. The pressure is on, not just for workers, but for those who rely on them. Employers are joining together to bridge this gap through Employer Resource Networks® while reaping the benefits of 657% average employer ROI, according to the latest *ERN USA 2024 KPI Report.*

In 2024, Employer Resource Networks® served 5,699 employees at 160 employer member companies with 11,600 supportive employment solutions, achieving 19% average utilization. Lack of resources and skills stretch workers thin financially, emotionally, and mentally affecting company productivity.

“More and more, states and foundations are stepping up where federal aid has backed off,” said James Vander Hulst, Chief Disruptive Officer, ERN USA. “Nonprofits are tapping into the resilience they are known for, leveraging creative funding and partnerships to keep people afloat. Employers can do the same - and must.”

Since the launch of the first Michigan Lakeshore ERN in 2007, ERN USA has grown to over 30 existing and developing ERNs in 10 states serving 28,285 employee members with over 85,124 case needs. “Through the 2008 crash and the COVID-19 pandemic, Employer Resource Networks® have experienced how crucial it is to support employees when situations get difficult,” said James. “We will weather this storm together.”

As economic times grow tougher, employee basic needs for job retention and financial stability are expected to increase. “Worker retention is no longer just an HR talking point -it’s a company survival strategy,” said Amy Waters, Irwin Seating Senior Human Resources Manager and ERN® Member Employer. “Employee performance and longevity gains come from workforce investment and are key to business and community sustainability.”

Employer Resource Networks® (ERNs®) provide onsite successful coach solutions centered around employee retention and advancement, making the most of collaborative funds and partnerships. ERN® Data Solutions Salesforce and SharePoint platforms provide shared templates, employee outreach and advancement training, peer learning, and metrics that drive the impact of the network. Employee need trends reveal referrals around critical issues such as mental health, childcare, and housing.

“When employee strain gets too heavy, workers leave, and when they leave, organizations lose more than just a warm body,” said James. “Companies lose training, trust, and talent – a large investment. Businesses can’t afford to not support their workforce. ERN USA continues to expand its membership and offerings for greatest impact.”

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