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MEDIA CONTACT  
Office of Communications  
602-542-4296  
[PIO@azdes.gov](mailto:PIO@azdes.gov)

## DES Announces Privatization of Arizona Industries for the Blind *Nonprofit 501 (c) (3) Status Granted*

**PHOENIX** -- The Department of Economic Security (DES) lauds the passage of SB1411, the privatization of the Arizona Industries for the Blind as passed by the Legislature and signed by Governor Ducey. The Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) is a rehabilitative services program that has been operating under DES since 1973, but has been self-supporting since the mid-80s. More than seventy-five percent of its direct labor workforce is legally blind. The transition of Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB) to a private nonprofit will best position AIB to fulfill its mission of creating, sustaining and improving employment opportunities for people who are blind.

"On behalf of the Department of Economic Security, I'd like to thank Governor Ducey and members of the Legislature for support of this legislation," said Director Tim Jeffries. "This is a huge win for our colleagues at AIB. The transition will allow them to grow and continue providing much needed employment and training services to individuals who are blind, assisting them towards self-sufficiency. I could not be more pleased."

"The Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry is extremely pleased with the adoption of legislation to move the empowering services of Arizona Industries for the Blind to the private non-profit sector," said Glenn Hamer, president and CEO of the Arizona Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Governor Ducey, Director Jeffries and the Legislature deserve tremendous credit for this important reform that will position Arizona's visually impaired citizens to better improve their access to needed services and training that will lead to upward mobility. This is an accomplishment to be proud of."

Arizona Industries for the Blind provides employment and training opportunities for Arizonans who are blind. AIB is market-driven and technology enabled, providing products and services to military, government and commercial customers. AIB operates under the AbilityOne Program and is an affiliate of National Industries for the Blind. The complete transfer establishing AIB as a private nonprofit corporation will take effect July 1, 2017.

"Seventy percent of working-age Americans who are blind are not employed and we need to change that," said General Manager Richard Monaco. "Arizona Industries for the Blind has been a self-supporting enterprise fund within DES for many years, and this is perfect timing for a new beginning. AIB will continue to be a model for the community, demonstrating that there are no limits to what a person who is blind can do. AIB greatly appreciates the many years of support from DES."

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