



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC SECURITY

Your Partner For A Stronger Arizona

News Release

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Arizona Industries for the Blind Achieves Nonprofit Status

Former DES Program Goes Private

PHOENIX – The Arizona Department of Economic Security (DES) announced today the agency has completed the steps necessary for the privatization of the Arizona Industries for the Blind (AIB), a rehabilitative services program that has been operating under DES since 1973. In 2016, Senator Adam Driggs sponsored SB 1411, which allowed for the separation of the entities. AIB will receive its 501(c)(3) status effective July 1, 2017.

“DES congratulates AIB for the attainment of nonprofit status, which will allow it to continue its mission of inspiring individuals with visual impairment to develop their professional careers,” said DES Director Michael Traylor. “Our primary goal at DES is to strengthen individuals and families by increasing self-sufficiency. We believe AIB will continue to help us achieve this goal as a nonprofit.”

With a workforce of more than 75% of individuals who are blind or visually impaired, AIB also provides employment and training opportunities. AIB is market-driven and technology enabled, providing products and services to commercial companies, as well as the federal government and U.S. military through the AbilityOne® Program. AIB is part of a nationwide network of nonprofit agencies associated with National Industries for the Blind (NIB), the nation’s largest employment resource for people who are blind.

“AIB is well positioned to successfully operate as a private, independent nonprofit organization,” said NIB President and CEO Kevin Lynch. “AIB has created and maintained hundreds of jobs for people who are blind in Arizona, helping them lead more independent lives through meaningful employment. I expect AIB to continue to deliver quality products and services to federal and commercial customers for many years to come.”

AIB has been operating as a self-supporting program since the 1980’s, under the DES Division of Employment and Rehabilitation Services, which administers a multitude of programs aimed at connecting Arizona job seekers to employment, educational and rehabilitative opportunities. After much consideration, it was determined the program would operate best as a private nonprofit.

“Arizona Industries for the Blind has been a self-supporting enterprise within DES for many years, and this is perfect timing for a new beginning,” said AIB General Manager Richard Monaco. “AIB will continue to be a model for the community, demonstrating 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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The Arizona Department of Economic Security makes Arizona stronger by helping Arizonans reach their potential through temporary assistance for those in need, and care for the vulnerable.

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