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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 03/01/2021

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**Pritzker Administration Announces Inaugural Graduating Class from
Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice's Barber and Cosmetology
Training Program**

*Eight Youth in Care Complete Program Equipping Them with Critical Job Training Skills
Before Returning to Their Home Communities*

CHICAGO – Less than one year after its commencement, Governor Pritzker and the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) are celebrating the first graduating class from the department's accredited barber and cosmetology program. The program, sponsored by famed barber Larry Roberts and his non-profit DATA Foundation, Inc, is available to youth in care at IYC Chicago and IYC Warrenville via the Hope Barber Shop and Salon Maya. The first cohort of eight graduates have successfully completed 1,500 hours of instruction and clinicals and are now eligible to take their state board exams; the final step in becoming a professionally licensed barber or cosmetologist through the Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation.

"When we provide opportunities for growth and job training to our young people, when they learn to believe in themselves, great things happen. That's why it's so exciting to celebrate eight graduates from our inaugural training program class – four from Warrenville and four from Chicago, seven in barbering and one in cosmetology and barbering," **said Governor JB Pritzker**. "These amazing young people have successfully completed their 1,500 hours of instruction and clinicals and will soon be sitting for their state board exams. From there, they'll be able to put their education and job training to work, maybe even starting a business for themselves someday."

"This vocational program embodies the heart of IDJJ's mission and exemplifies the opportunities we hope to provide to all of the youth at the Department", **said Director Heidi Mueller**. "We know that providing

youth with tangible skills and a real path to sustainable employment is not only an investment into their future, but also into the future of their communities upon their return home. We are excited about our new barbers and cosmetologist who are equipped to blaze a professional path for themselves upon their release.”

For Larry Roberts, the success of this program is a part of his life’s mission. Since 2010, he has worked to give incarcerated adults and youth a second chance in life by helping them to become a licensed Barber or Cosmetologist.

“At Larry’s Barber College, we focus on ensuring that our students are fully equipped to stand out and successfully manage themselves and their shops,” **said Larry Roberts, sponsor of the DJJ Barber and Cosmetology Program.** “We have life coaching classes, mentorship, we teach our students how to pay taxes, secure insurance, and more. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to this inaugural class of DJJ graduates and I look forward to seeing their continued success.”

A new cohort of students have already begun their barbering and cosmetology training, one of several post-secondary programs that youth at IDJJ can participate in. The department will continue working towards an expansion of its community partnerships and post-secondary options as it transitions to the 21st Century Transformation Model, an initiative that will reduce the harm of incarceration and focus on the rehabilitation of youth committed to IDJJ.

To learn more about the Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice’s plan for Transformation, please visit <https://www2.illinois.gov/idjj/Pages/default.aspx>.

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The Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) was created by statute in 2006 with the mandate of safely housing and rehabilitating youth committed to its custody. The mission of DJJ is to promote community safety and positive youth outcomes by building youth skills and strengthening families.