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For More Information Contact:
Dave Druker: 312-814-1506
ddruker@ilsos.gov
gov.press@illinois.gov

Jesse White Announces New State ID Program for Those Being Released from Prison

White joins with other state officials in offering the program

Illinois Secretary of State Jesse White announced a new program to provide individuals with a state ID card upon release from prison.

With support from the Office's of the First Lady MK Pritzker and Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton, Secretary White's office and Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) launched a pilot in December 2020 to explore how the program would work across state agencies. In an effort to streamline the process and utilize existing resources more effectively, the Secretary of State's office and IDOC launched an expanded pilot in April 2021, which has been rolled out to 18 IDOC facilities to date. The State ID Program for Returning Residents is modeled after the successful ID program that the Michigan Departments of State and Corrections launched in June of 2020.

"The State ID Program for Returning Residents gives people who have served their time in prison a necessary tool as they reenter their communities," said Secretary White. "A state ID card is essential to transition back into society."

The program is expected to serve 27 IDOC facilities by April 2022. As of October 2021, 346 state ID cards have been processed. The average daily population at IDOC is 27,323.

"A successful justice system is one that makes sure those who leave it are equipped to make the most of their second chance," said Governor JB Pritzker. "A job opportunity, a roof over your head, stability – these fundamentals are so much easier to secure with a state ID card in hand. I applaud my incredible wife, First Lady MK Pritzker, Lt. Governor Juliana Stratton and Secretary of State Jesse White for their work to ensure returning residents have what they need to put their best foot forward."

"In many of my conversations with women impacted by the justice system, one major barrier to reentry was shared time and time again: obtaining a state ID card post-release," said First Lady Pritzker. "I am so proud of the months of interagency collaboration that was poured into developing a program to better support returning residents and better their chances at success upon reentry. It is important that the work we do centers the voices of those with lived experience, and this program is an example of just that."

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“People should never be defined by the mistakes they’ve made,” said Lt. Governor Stratton. “This pilot program is about compassion and common sense because it allows us to support the people who are released from IDOC facilities to best prepare for their return to their communities. Successful reentry often hinges on the ability to possess state identification which increases the likelihood of getting a job, finding housing and accessing vital services.”

“Equipping individuals in custody with the resources they need to reintegrate into their communities successfully reduces the likelihood they will return to IDOC,” said Illinois Department of Corrections Director Rob Jeffreys. “We are proud to work with the Secretary of State and our agency partners to implement innovative solutions that help break the cycle of incarceration for many Illinois families.”

To obtain a state ID card, the applicant works with IDOC to gather and maintain vital documents. IDOC photographs the applicant using specific equipment and methods required by the Secretary of State’s office. IDOC then electronically transmits the applicant’s documentation, photo and signature to the Secretary of State’s office using a secure file transfer system mailbox. If all documentation and eligibility requirements are met, the Secretary of State’s office processes the request and sends the state ID to IDOC headquarters for distribution to the corresponding facility. IDOC then gives the state ID card to the individual upon release.

“For many, like myself, who are away for many years, vital documents that are required to get a state ID are lost or misplaced,” said Maria Garza who was released on Mandatory Supervised Release (MSR) from Logan Correctional Center in June. “Obtaining these documents after release can take weeks of running back and forth from agency to agency. It becomes a disheartening and hopeless experience for many. I am thankful to receive the assistance of counselors and clinical service department staff at Logan Correctional Center with securing the necessary vital documents needed prior to my release.”

According to state law, there is no charge for a state ID card for a person being released from prison.